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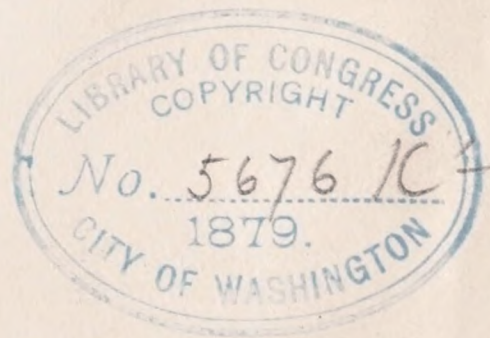
OR

“The Days That Are Not.”

By Mrs. W. Hilton Broom,

THE PRIZE STORY

From the Charleston Weekly News.



CHARLESTON, S. C.

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ASHURST;

OR

THE DAYS THAT ARE NOT.

CHAPTER I.

We talked with open heart and tongue,
Affectionate and true.

[Wordsworth.]

A large, old plantation house, with a wide piazza and broad, high steps. On the top step a young girl sits with a book on her knees; but her eyes are not by any means steadily fixed upon it; on the contrary they look up every minute or two, and wander away past the large oak before the door, and across the wide lawn, to where the bounding woods conceal an unseen fence, its presence only indicated by two high wooden gates, which appear at opposite corners of the broad green expanse. Green, not indeed to an English eye—not emerald, but a pale grayish green tint, showing a mild winter and the upspringing of the new, close herbage, which, in the South, is accepted in lieu of turf.

A nice, gentle-looking old lady, in a black dress and large white cap, came out of the house and stood quietly for some minutes behind the girl, then laying a kind hand on her shoulder, said, caressingly:

"Is the book very dull, Janet, that you read so carelessly?"

"No, grandmamma; but the coming letter-bag is still more interesting."

"Why, whom do you expect to hear from?"

"From—mother," answered the girl, with a slight hesitation, and, springing lightly up, she passed her arm through her grandmother's, and coaxed her to walk up and down the piazza with her.

"From—mother; and, to tell you a secret, grandmamma, I expect it to have some very interesting news, a delightful permission in it."

"A delightful permission! What, pray?"

"Well, you must know that last week, when you and grandpapa said how much you would like me to stay here longer, I took heart of grace and wrote to her, begging her to let me stay—until the spring."

"You did, Jeanie! She will never consent."

"Oh! yes she will. I was wise," said the girl with a slight mocking tone in her voice; "I didn't write to papa, in fact I hardly mentioned him. I threw myself entirely at her feet, and really I think she will. She is always good-natured if it doesn't interfere with her, and as I have had the good luck to grow half a head taller than Agnes, and can't be made to wear her old clothes any more, it will be quite economical to leave me here."

"Her old clothes," said the grandmother in a tone of offended pride; "that may have done, my darling, when you were children, but now," looking up proudly at the tall, slender figure on whose arm she leant, "surely your father would never think of that now."

"Papa!" said the girl with a clear, musical laugh. "Papa! well—yes—I suppose that he *does* know that we wear frocks, but that is the extent of his knowledge. He would not notice if I had on your gown, grandmamma, and it is rather provoking sometimes, for Agnes is so dark, and looks best in reds and yellows, and though of course it is of no real consequence, yet when I find my tow colored head in a yellow bonnet, and my sallow face in a buff frock, you know it is a trial—to a goose." She ended with a laugh.

"It certainly should not be," said the old lady, indignantly. "James is quite too well off, and so open-hearted! There never seems to be any want of money, my child?"

"I don't know," answered the girl, slowly. "Papa certainly does not seem worried, though I heard him tell her one day that he could not imagine how it went—and yet she is the closest manager! Looks to every candle end, especially lately, and I think she is worried often, though she tries to hide it."

"I don't understand—don't see how it can be—your mother's fortune alone—however, we will say no more about it, but I will provide your things myself."

"Oh! no, grandmamma, that would not do, and papa did say the other day that I was getting too 'leggy a colt' for such short frocks, so I think I have had the last of them."

"And high time too. And now my darling, about your staying with us. It would be so delightful, but Penelope has always been so

particular about the precise time, and your education being interfered with."

"Ah! but you don't see the flight of time, grandmamma. I have left school now for good, you know, and there am I a great tall girl stuck up in the drawing-room. I can't exactly be sent to bed, and I am so big that it doesn't look civil if I sit behind the table and read when visitors come in, and they will talk to me and call me Miss Berkley, and Agnes doesn't like that, and it worries her. I am an uncomfortable creature, grandmamma, not a schoolgirl, and not a young lady."

I should say that you were *both*," answered the old lady, "and you have masters, my dear."

"Only for music and German now, and I wrote a famous account of my practicing, (you know I do strum by the hour,) with no idle companions to distract my attention, I said, and as for German, why I learn quantities more from that dear old curiosity at Uncle Ralph's in a day than from Mademoiselle Schwartz in a month; besides any amount of odds and ends of botany, geology and so on. I put it very prettily in my letter, 'varied scientific information interestingly imparted.'"

"You are a magpie," said the old lady laughingly; "Mrs. Berkley will not be so easily imposed upon."

"You are a hard-hearted old lady," said the girl coaxingly; "you don't want your poor grandchild any more; you are tired of her, and you know it!"

"Very likely! but there comes old Tim, and I own I am anxious to see the answer."

In fact, an old negro man, mounted on an ancient pony, was soberly pacing across the lawn at the rate of about two miles an hour, an easy style of progression, which did not at all suit the impatient young lady, who, flying down the steps, stood waiving and beckoning (perfectly in vain) to hurry him on.

"Oh! Uncle Tim; I thought you were never going to get here; what did make you so late?"

"Kye, Missy, wha' mek' you so hurry? It ain't no late; de letter keep good," said the old man slowly unslinging his leather bag. "No you be so hurry, you lose dem. Gib dem to ole Miss, she no hairy-skairy like de young folks dese days," and with a grin the old African passed on.

The young girl sat down on the steps, and, with hands which trembled with excitement, unbuckled the bag. Quickly pouncing upon her own letter, she tossed the sack up to her grandfather, who also now appeared to greet the event of the day, and, tearing open the envelope, devoured the contents with eager eyes. "Victoria!" she cried, after a moment's eager perusal. "See, grandmamma, I am to stay two whole months longer; now you know you can't turn me out, and won't I have a nice time, and ride, and row, and fish, and tease your dear old heart out."

"My darling, you don't say so! I am so

very happy. Let me see; what does she say?"

The letter which Janet held ran thus:

"*My Dear Janet*: I have received your letter, (no date) and am pleased to hear that your grand-parents continue to enjoy that greatest of blessings, good health. Also, I observe with satisfaction that you have improved in your epistolary style, and also in your handwriting, (there is still a sad negligence in your punctuation) and that you at length appear to attach that importance to education with which I have so long endeavored to inspire you. This has induced me to consider favorably your request for a longer sojourn in the country. Here (as you truly remark) you have many idle companions to distract your attention, and the visitors now attracted to the house (I need not say by whom) might still further interfere with your studies. The account you give of the German teacher at your uncle's (although, I presume, drawn with habitual exaggeration) is also satisfactory. You do not mention the remuneration for these instructions, from which I infer that Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn prefer *arranging* it themselves. Be sure to let me know about this. Our expenses are heavy, and we must consider *every item*, especially since Agnes's introduction into society, and the consequent expenses. The dear girl is moderation itself, and will hardly accept the dresses, &c., that we know to be necessary for her position. You, my dear, are happy that in your's simplicity is your best ornament; and this reminds me that you say nothing of your wardrobe. *Amplly* supplied as you were before leaving home, I suppose that you can need nothing more; nevertheless I will send a dress by the next boat, that handsome merino which Agnes wore last winter. One of your grandmother's skilful sempstresses can easily let it down for you, (in the country a short skirt is by far the most appropriate,) by piecing it under the flounce. Until May then, my dear, we consent to part with you, knowing what pleasure it gives your relations to have you, and that it is greatly to your advantage to pursue your studies undisturbed by the frivolities of a city life. Give my compliments and your father's to Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn, and also to your uncle and aunt and Herr Muller, and express to the latter our sense of the advantage which his instruction is to you. Adieu, my dear. If your father knew that I was writing he would send his love, as Agnes does, and believe me always,

Your affectionate mother,

PENELOPE BERKLEY."

"What does she say?" repeated the old lady, holding out her hand for the letter. But Janet who, at the first glance, had only recognized that the desired permission was granted, flushed as she hastily looked over it, and putting it behind her back said gaily:

"No, no, grandmamma, you are not to see it, you don't appreciate Mrs. Berkley's episto-

lary style as you ought; but she says—she says that I am to stay until May—that is the grand point, and that she and papa (poor papa!) send their love to you and grandpapa, and to uncle and aunt Ralph, and to Herr Muller; and that I can't want any clothes, but that nevertheless I shall have a new frock, which was an old one when Agnes left it off last spring. Also that she is my affectionate mother—that's all."

"Is she?" said the old lady drily. "Well, my pet, we are much obliged to her, and you must write and tell her so. Now go and tell grandpapa about it—he will be so delighted."

CHAPTER II.

He * * * * *
* * * * * in the bloom
Of boyhood was, and so was graced
With all that earliest runs to waste

[Taylor.]

As may be supposed from the foregoing chapter, Penelope Berkley was not Janet's own mother.

James Berkley, her father, had started in life with but one firm resolve—to take the world by the smooth handle. If he had ever spoken French "*glissez mortel, n'appuyez pas*" would have been his motto, but as he did not, "take it easy boys" was his favorite phrase, and he had early discovered that the simplest way to effect this purpose was to say that rough monosyllable "No" as seldom as possible. Left an orphan when a boy, he had been brought up by his uncle and guardian, Mr. Selwyn, who, doting on him as the child of a dear, only sister, and having no sons of his own, indulged him in every respect. Being possessed of good abilities and a quick memory, he had done fairly well at school. With his taste and capacity it was easier to do so than to be always in trouble with the masters, and at sixteen Mr. Selwyn pointed to him triumphantly as the result of judicious indulgence. At twenty, however, things did not look so well.

At college the incentives to study were not so strong, the temptations to idleness greater. "Nothing so good as a university education," says the wise Col. Morley, in "What will he do with it?" "Nothing so bad as a university without the education." The truth of this axiom was seen in James Berkley. The university was near a great city, and he, with his handsome face, pleasant, joyous manners, and open purse, was soon overrun with invitations and engagements of all kinds. Nothing came amiss to him; any amusement, from cock-fighting "on the sly" to private theatricals in B——, he was delighted to share in. "Bonnie King Jamie" his comrades called him, and declared that he was the best of all good fellows; but professors looked grave and shook their heads, and soon the

head-shaking turned to reprimands and solemn threats and warnings. Berkley was very sorry; he honestly wished to please everybody, and tried his best to do so. Even here his pleasantness stood him in good stead; not a professor there, not even the grave "Head" himself could be proof against that bright, sunny face and winning manners. He was always sinning, they said to each other, but then his contrition was evidently sincere—and for the time it was so. If he seldom came to chapel, ("it was so rough," he piteously said, "to go through the December snow at day-break.") his demeanor when there was perfectly reverential; if his recitations were faulty and his presence at lectures rare, yet his enjoyment of those which he did hear was so genuine, that the unspoken flattery of those eager eyes, and the look of quick apprehension, mollified the sternest professor, and oftener than can well be believed did these influences serve him when his sins were being examined into. Misdemeanors that would have brought expulsion upon most men, were, time after time, condoned by an admonition, or a suspension. But the evil day could not be averted for ever; and at last, a few weeks after he had attained his majority, sentence of expulsion was pronounced. Everybody was sorry; but not even the scape-grace himself could be surprised. For one night he shut himself up, grieved and humiliated; resolved to "pull up," pay his bills and go home. With the morning gayer thoughts returned. It was near the vacation; a party of his classmates were going on a fishing excursion into the mountains. "Wait only a few weeks and go with us," they cried; "don't go back to the South now, in June!" He waited, and worse came of it, for on the said excursion he fell in with Miss Agnes Peacroft, daughter of the village schoolmaster, who managed so dexterously, that at the end of three weeks of sentimental attentions on her side, and amused acceptance of them on his, he, as one of his friends said, "consented to marry her." "Surprised at it? No," said this ingenuous youth, when, on returning to the University, he was greeted with eager questions and expressions of amazement. "I'm not a bit surprised; would have been, by Jove, if he *hadn't* married her. She's not bad-looking; black eyes, rosy face, trim little figure, and, besides, what could the poor devil do? She asked him, you know, or rather she told him that he had asked her, and Berkley had never contradicted a woman in his life; he couldn't begin then; so he said 'yes,' and she married him, and a very sensible thing to do—for her, I mean—he's an out and out good fellow; if I had been the woman I'd have married him long ago, by Jove I would," added the Junior with some confusion of language, but a clear perception of his friend's virtues and weaknesses. No one, however, not even Berkley himself, perhaps, knew that this "yes" had been the hardest to say, or rather to act up to, of his whole life; for down in the bottom

of his easy-going heart was a something very like love for his pretty fair-haired cousin, Janet Selwyn, a delicate little girl of sixteen, the only daughter and darling of the old house at home. He had always supposed, vaguely, that she would some day be his wife, and now one of the clearest notions that he had about his marriage was, that it would part him from Janet. But Janet was far away, trimming her flowers and feeding her birds, on the old plantation, and Miss Agnes Peacroft was on the spot, making very ardent love. He said no more, even to himself, of doubt or hesitation, and they were married.

Great was the consternation when the pretty knotted cards, the first intimation of the marriage, reached Ashurst. Mrs. Selwyn cried, and Mr. Selwyn swore; pretty Janet looked pale, but said loyally that "she must be nice or Jamie would not have married her." Aunts, uncles and cousins gathered in council, and it was decided that as the deed was done, the best should be made of it; and Mr. Selwyn who, having done the most to spoil his nephew, was of course the most indignant at his conduct, was at last persuaded to allow his wife to write, not indeed a cordial, but at least a conventionally polite letter of welcome, to her new niece, and another to her nephew, in which, after some slight reproaches for his "want of confidence in those who had always endeavored to deserve it," she invited him to bring his bride on and pay them a visit at their house in D—, where they would be for the autumn months. "His uncle," she told him, "said he was a bad boy and bade him come to be scolded, and Janet sent her love to both her cousins."

They came, and sorely tried were the good resolutions adopted in the Berkley-Selwyn family council. The bride, a mere village belle, with considerable prettiness and some natural intelligence, was entirely devoid of all elegance of mind or manner, and almost equally so of the simplicity and good temper, which alone can make amends for the want. Instructed to the extent of her father's "first class," she mistook the knowledge of a number of isolated facts for education, and a good memory for a cultivated mind. Add to this disposition the spirit of a reformer, and the idea may be formed of the jar produced in the hitherto harmonious family circle.

Poor Mrs. Selwyn was fairly nonplussed. Her gentle dignity could not defend her from the aggressive vulgarity of this young barbarian, to whom timidity was unknown and reverence a superstition.

"A married lady," Mrs. James Berkley held, "was the equal of anybody." Old people were necessarily behind the times, and especially inferior to herself, as from the most "advanced" part of the Union.

What could be more natural, more praiseworthy, than that she should kindly endeavor to enlighten and improve her new relatives. Accordingly she lectured Mr. Selwyn on politics and agriculture, and his wife on house-

keeping and society; informing the one, with but little circumlocution, that he was narrow-minded and *rococo*—the other that she was wasteful and dull. She even condescended to inquire into Janet's studies and occupations, censuring her books as old-fashioned, and her ways as "poky." The Selwyns marvelled and groaned over "poor dear James," but bore all. "There never has been a family quarrel among us," said Mrs. Selwyn, "and there never shall be if I can help it." And so she soothed her husband, and kept the peace, but rejoiced greatly when, at the end of three months, the young couple moved to a house of their own. The next summer they returned to the North, and, two days after Mr. Berkley had announced to his friends the birth of a daughter, came the further intelligence of the death of his wife.

The good people were, if not grieved, at least much shocked. It had not been possible to like Agnes while alive, but now that she was dead they remembered that she had been young, handsome and happy, and gave some sad, solemn thoughts to the young life cut short, speaking softly and kindly, "because that they were thinking less upon the dead than upon death."

Mrs. Selwyn wrote again, a truly cordial and sympathetic letter this time, offering to take and rear the child, as she had done her nephew himself, hinting as delicately as possible at the advantage of having his daughter brought up among his own people. Mr. Berkley was fully conscious of this, but his wife's mother had already claimed the child as hers by right; and he, glad to escape discussion, perhaps too, unconsciously glad to escape altogether from this episode of his life, agreed to leave it with her "for the present," and, settling to pay her a handsome yearly sum for its support, returned home. Two years after he married his cousin, Janet Selwyn. And now the easy-going man was happy indeed. He loved his young wife with all his heart, and all for whose approval he cared smiled a "well-done" upon him.

Fair and sweet lay his life before him; but in the midst of the calm came the storm, and in little more than a year James Berkley was the father of another daughter, and again a widower.

Even his happy nature gave way under this new blow; for some months every semblance of peace left him. He could not endure the sight of his baby or of the place where he had been so happy, and at last astonished his friends by suddenly announcing that he intended to give up planting, go to the city and engage in business.

"Pray don't ask me not to," he said to his advisers when they attempted to dissuade him. "I should hate to refuse you, and the truth is I want people about me—I want a crowd. This solitude is frightful to me—I cannot bear it. Here, where she has been, it is so lonely without her."

They respected his grief and forbore.

He went to the city and offered himself and

his capital to a friend of his who had very lately gone into business, and, after some hesitation, was accepted as a partner, on the solemn promise that he would never make any arrangement, conclude any bargain, or sign any paper without having first submitted it to his partner. "For you see, my dear Jem," said the latter, "that although you are a deuced sight cleverer fellow than I am, and will, if let alone, see the rights and wrongs fast enough, yet that dreadful habit of saying 'yes,' of yours, will ruin us both if you don't bind yourself."

Mr. Berkley laughed, but assented, and the firm prospered; his partner supplied the element of firmness, he of suavity, and his ready perception and quick intelligence made him a really good business man. An instinct like that which leads the sick animal to the healing herb had surely led him to this occupation, for in a short time his easy temper resumed its sway, his cheerfulness returned, and his friends hardly remembered that "Jem Berkley" was a doubly widowed man. His little Janet, of course, remained with her grand-parents; he saw her frequently, and was extremely fond of her, but no idea of responsibility mingled with his caressing affection.

And so time went by, and the only trace which his troubles had left on his bright facile nature seemed to be a resolve never again to marry. More than one fair damsel would have been willing to forgive the existence of the two children, and console him for the two wives; but the very instant that any one looked more than common kind, Mr. Berkley retreated, and betook himself to less dangerous companionship. One day, however, when Janet was about twelve years old, this calm was suddenly disturbed.

CHAPTER III.

"How doth the little crocodile
Improve his shining tail,
And pour the waters of the Nile
On every golden scale !

"How cheerfully he seems to grin.
How neatly spreads his claws,
And welcomes little fishes in,
With gently smiling jaws !"

[*Alice in Wonderland.*]

Mr. Parkyns, sorting his letters, exclaimed: "'James Berkley, Esq.," in a black border an inch and a half wide. That's for you, Jim. What is the matter?" as Mr. Berkley, tearing open and hastily glancing at the letter, dropped it with a *grunt* of what sounded more like vexation than grief.

"My mother-in-law is dead," replied Mr. Berkley.

"Mrs. Selwyn? Good Heavens! My dear fellow, you don't say so?" for Mr. Parkyns knew well that Mrs. Selwyn was an altogether exceptional mother-in-law.

"No, no, not my aunt—God forbid! My other mother-in-law. Don't you know that I have two?"

"Oh, yes! of course. I beg pardon, I'm sure, only for the moment, you see, I forgot." In fact he had forgotten—had hardly ever heard of—her existence.

"Very likely; yes, she is dead, poor old lady, and now the trouble is, what am I to do with the child?"

"The child"—striving vainly to remember something about it—"to be sure. What will you do? How old is it?"

"Why, let me see, bless my soul, Parkyns, she must be nearly grown up—about sixteen! what shall I do with a grown-up daughter?"

Mr. Parkyns laughed aloud.

"My dear Berkley, I beg your pardon again, but the idea is really absurd; however, I suppose that you had better bring her home and get your aunt to see to her. Who is she with now?"

"Now? Oh, since her grandmother's death, with her aunt, a younger sister of my poor wife, who, indeed, I rather fancy, has had the chief charge of her; at least I think the letters, as well as I remember, used, until she could write herself, to be written by an aunt—yes—'Penelope Peacroft,' that is the same name."

Long as he had known his friend and partner, Mr. Parkyns could not help some wonder at this "happy-go-lucky" way of arranging his daughter's education, but he merely said:

"And what does she say now?"

Mr. Berkley read aloud: "In my unprotected condition, I feel myself unable to continue the precious charge, which (under my mother's sheltering wing) has been so delightful to me, and I must resign my Agnes just when her developing graces of mind and body make it doubly painful to me to part with her. I must, therefore, request that you will come to receive, in person, the cherished charge—un—un—un—"

"Poor soul! yes, I dare say she feels it hard, eh Parkyns?"

"I dare say," answered that gentleman drily. "Is she a young lady?"

"Miss Penelope—I don't remember. No, of course not; about forty probably."

"Oh! She writes with much composure. How long has her mother been dead?"

Mr. Berkley again had recourse to his letter:—"Inform you that my beloved mother breathed her last in the peaceful dawning of this day." "The same day, you see."

"Yes, you will have to go on at once. I suppose. That business of Robinson's," &c.

Mr. Berkley went on, and returned four months afterwards, with his *third* wife, the sister of his first!

"I must say that, for the sweetest and most amiable of men, your cousin James does inflict more shocks upon his family than any one I ever heard of," said Mrs. George Berkley, a fair and lively Bostonian, who had

lately come to infuse animation into the somewhat too tranquil waters of D—— society. "Why were we not romantic, George?" When I think of the humdrum way in which we were married! It was almost as prosaic as being 'asked' in church."

"And as decent," growled her husband. I should like to have seen your mother, aye, and you yourself, my lady, had I dared to propose any such romantic tricks as Jem's! Once in a lifetime one can understand it; but now—why the fellow is near forty."

"'No fool like an old fool!' Not that I call forty old, I am nearly thirty myself, and you know the Selwyns if consulted might have objected, and James would have been between two fires. Even now he may have trouble; for if Mrs. James interferes with Janet, Mr. Selwyn will show fight."

Mrs. George was right. The Selwyns' anxiety as to how this new marriage might affect Janet was great. Mr. Selwyn, indeed, treated the matter scornfully, and replied to his wife's suggestions that their nephew—son-in-law—might choose to have both his daughters with him, with sovereign contempt.

"Janet," he said, "was his grandchild and heiress—belonged to him. No stepmother should touch her. James had another daughter already—might have twenty more for aught he cared. Janet was his."

Mrs. Selwyn could not feel so confident. She recalled bye-gone experiences and feminine love of power; sighed over her nephew's weakness of character, and acknowledged his parental authority; doubted her own right to withhold the child should he demand her, and feared the worst. Meanwhile, being perfectly honorable and upright, she carefully avoided saying a word that could prejudice her granddaughter against her new relatives, and, on the contrary, spoke of her nephew's long solitude, and how well it was that he should now have a home of his own, and his children with him. Janet apparently thought but little of the coming stepmother, but dwelt with delight on the sister, whose existence she had, in truth, hardly hitherto realized. Mr. Berkley, with constitutional avoidance of painful topics, had never mentioned his first wife or her child to the daughter of his second, and the Selwyns, mistaking what was, in fact, an absence of deep feeling for an excess of it, had respected what they supposed to be a morbidly sensitive reserve, and, while telling Janet the little they knew of the first Mrs. Berkley and her child, had charged her never to speak to her papa of what would worry him. The little girl, occupied with her own amusements, had thought hardly at all about it until now, but now she drew a bright ideal image, and prepared to worship it with her whole warm, young heart.

They came, and while Mrs. Selwyn was infinitely relieved, Janet was equally disappointed; for Agnes proved to be totally unlike her ideal in everything save beauty, and so cold to her impulsive young adorer that

Janet, who had laid herself and her possessions at her feet, was chilled to the heart. If the young girl offered ring or bracelet, work-box or sash, such as her grand-parents had lavished upon her, they were accepted without warmth, indeed, but still with evident satisfaction. But if she poured out the fancies of her youthful heart, told stories of her own short life or sought to know somewhat of her sister's, Agnes froze—called her "child" in a voice trying to aspiring thirteen; declined either to give or receive confidence, and, without absolute rudeness, raised such a barrier between herself and her sister, that Janet, pained and mortified, was forced to abandon her hope of a new and charming affection.

All the confidence that Agnes repelled Mrs. Berkley eagerly invited. Nothing could be more conciliating, more eager to please, more tender to Janet, more deferential to the Selwyns than she. And Mrs. Selwyn, remembering the pert vulgarity and intolerable meddling of the first Mrs. Berkley, was thankful to find her sister a well-looking and tolerably well-bred woman of forty, whose manners, if too elaborate for elegance, were at least inoffensive and mild.

Mr. Berkley seemed content. His wife was a good manager, his house comfortable, his daughter handsome and lady-like, and if he were not much at home, and very silent when there, the first might be set down to the unsettled habits of his twelve years of widowhood; the second to the well known effect of matrimony.

Mrs. Selwyn said that her new niece was a good little woman, who meant well. Mr. Selwyn said that there was no harm in her, and although Mrs. Ralph Selwyn called her "shoppy" and Mrs. George Berkley declared that she had some trouble in suppressing "Please ma'am" at the beginning of her sentences, the general impression was in her favor; and his friends said that "Jem Berkley had done better than might have been expected."

The sole exception to this way of thinking was Janet.

Children are sometimes very keen-sighted, especially those who, brought up by very frank, honest-hearted people, are so accustomed to the clear sound ring of truth that they instinctively recognize the first jarring sound that tells of a flaw in integrity. And so Janet, with her honest young head and heart, tried her stepmother, and found her wanting in all which, to that uncompromising young damsel, constituted a lady. She seemed to look Mrs. Berkley through and through, with those clear, grey eyes of hers, and to herself she said, "She is a liar and the truth is not in her," but to her grandmother she only said, "I do not like her as well as you do, grandmamma, for I don't believe in all the pleasant things she says, especially about me. Agnes doesn't like me, and shows it, and that makes me sorry, but she, (Janet's only name for her except when, if obliged, she said stiffly "mother"

instead of the Southern girl's natural "mamma") is always protesting that she loves me dearly, and that makes me sorrier still. I don't think papa is happy either,' she added with a sigh. 'Last night I was alone with him for a minute—she never lets us be alone if she can help it—and he put his arm around me and said, 'Janet, do you remember your mamma?' And then when I cried, out, grandma, he said, 'No, true, poor child you cannot, but you have heard about her, your pretty mamma, my own Jeannie—try to be like her, child.' And then *she* came in, and he went out of the room, but I saw the tears in his eyes, and think she did, too, for she looked—grandma, she will do us some harm yet."

"I trust not, my child, I trust not," said the old lady, trembling. "And so James thinks of my Janet still—sometimes I think that he forgets everything. However, child, I really think her a good woman."

"I *hope* so, grandma, but I don't *think* it," Janet answered resolutely, and the conversation ended.

Things went on smoothly until Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn, having spent the summer in the city, were preparing to return to the plantation for the winter—Janet of course expecting to go with them.

The first cloud arose one day, when the Berkleys had been dining with the Selwyns. The whole family was sitting in the piazza, enjoying the mild purple beauty of the autumn afternoon, when Mrs. Berkley, turning to Janet, said, in her gentlest tones:

"My dear Janet, have you heard anything of this new music teacher who is so highly spoken of? I am to see him to-morrow to engage him for Agnes, and suppose that I had better make an arrangement for you at the same time."

"For me!" said Janet, amazed. "Why you know that we go into the country next week? It would not be worth while to take a couple of lessons."

"We!" my dear child. Who do you mean?"

Mrs. Selwyn interposed:

"We," with Janet means her grandfather and myself, Penelope. She has never known plans distinct from ours."

"My dear aunt, well do I know all your tender kindness to this dear child, but now—"

"Kindness," said Mrs. Selwyn, drawing herself up a little, "one is not *kind* to one's own."

"True, true, dear madam, but I mean that her father thinks"—. But here Mr. Berkley, suspecting mischief, sprang up, and asking his uncle eagerly "if those puppies were right pointers after all?" the two gentlemen, with true masculine cowardice, fled to the calmer precincts of the stable.

"Mr. Berkley thinks," his now untrammelled wife proceeded, "and I *quite* agree with him, that this dear girl is now of an age when education is the first necessity; and she

is so backward, I may say so deficient in many points, that another winter in the country would be most unfortunate."

Mrs. Selwyn could hardly believe her ears. Her Janet "deficient!" a winter spent with her "most unfortunate!" She could hardly control her indignation, but she managed to reply quietly:

"Do not imagine that Janet's winters are spent in idleness. Our clergyman, a highly educated man, gives her lessons regularly three times a week."

Mrs. Berkley deserved great credit for turning what was really a supercilious into a deprecating smile, as she answered:

"But, dear Mrs. Selwyn, this gentleman, educated as he may be, can hardly be competent to impart to a young lady those accomplishments, without which she can hardly hope for success in society."

This upset Mrs. Selwyn's temper utterly, and she answered sharply:

"We have never been accustomed to strain after success in society. It has been a part of our birthright. The ends of education, I think, far different."

"Dear, dearest aunt," in a frightened tone, "do not mistake me; my only wish is for our child's welfare."

"Our child's," thought Mrs. Selwyn; but she was ashamed of having lost the serene dignity of years, and answered more gently:

"I have expressed no doubt of it, Penelope, but Janet's welfare has so long depended upon us that I was not prepared for this. It is a point on which her father must decide, and I must be very sure of his wishes before I can consent."

"My dear aunt, delicacy—"

"The carriage is at the door, my dear," interrupted Mr. Berkley, calling from the foot of the steps, "and—and—there is a storm coming up, you had best make haste. No thank you, aunt, I can't come in. Hurry, Agnes, don't you see the clouds."

"Good-bye, my dear aunt," (squeezing her hand tenderly.) "I am sure we agree in wishing only for *her* improvement. Good-bye, dearest Janet." Then whispering, "I have the prettiest room for you. I am sure that you will have a charming time," kissing her. But Janet drew back her cold cheek and said, "my room is next to grandmamma's, thank you."

"Dear child! How affectionate! Good-bye, Mr. Selwyn; a most delightful day, I'm sure."

Mr. Berkley was appealed to by all parties, but as Mrs. George Berkley said, "what chance had the Selwyns, clumsy people, who told the truth and lost their tempers, against the smooth fibs and flatteries of Mrs. James?"

Mr. Berkley, of course, agreed with every one, but his wife had him oftenest and carried her point. From that time Janet's visits to her grandparents were happy holidays, few and far between.

CHAPTER IV.

"Who shall find a virtuous woman ? * * *
 * * * She looketh well to the ways of her house-
 hold, and eateth not the bread of idleness "

Proverbs.

We left Janet pouring her delight into her equally delighted grandfather's ears, and the mutual congratulations were resumed the next day, while she accompanied the old gentleman on his accustomed morning rounds to stables, barn and sheepfold. But when he, preparing to go further afield, would have ordered her horse for her to ride round the plantation with him, she demurred, reminding him of Herr Muller, and that she must go over to "Uncle Ralph's" for her lesson.

Somewhat unwillingly the old gentleman consented, and rode away grumbling that for a girl who would one day be the owner of a large estate it was quite as necessary to know her own place and people as the German irregular verbs.

Janet returned to the house in quest of her grandmother, but looked in vain in store-room, dairy and parlor.

"Where is grandmamma?" she asked, impatiently, at last, of the old servant, who was slowly polishing the already shining brass of the dining-room fender and "dogs" to a yet more dazzling brightness.

"Ole Miss in de close-room, deh see 'bout de summer cloes."

"Summer clothes," said Janet, with a shiver, "Why Cæsar, its February! or at least the first of March!"

"Yes missy, but de cloes aint gwine done make to-morrow day; an ole miss she no like for hurry; you nebber catch him people naked," answered the old man triumphantly.

"As you would certainly catch time, I'm afraid you think Cæsar," said Janet, laughing, as she ran lightly up the long flights of broad, shallow stepped, black oak stairs that led to the high-pitched, cedar shingled garret, in which the said clothes-room was situated. Reaching the top she paused and looked round. Nearly the whole of the large roof was used as a wine-room, and on long shelves stood rows upon rows of bottles, in which the rich Madeira slowly changed from ruby to amber, and then to palest straw color. From the beams on one side hung rows of hams, for the curing of which Mrs. Selwyn was famous, and from one small closet exhaled a curious hay-like smell. Janet knew it well, and made a wry face as she snuffed it. It was the "yarb-room," stocked with dried plants of every kind, from which drinks, febrifuges or plasters could be made—potions, which when sweetened with molasses, were as much sought by the negroes as they were dreaded by the white inhabitants of Ashurst; but Mrs. Sel-

wyn believed in "*tisane*" as firmly as a French-woman could have done, and Janet had often in her childhood been dosed with orange-leaf or life-everlasting tea, or benne water from the fragrant closet.

The eastern end of the garret was partitioned off, and formed the cloth room, in which Mrs. Selwyn now sat, holding counsel with an elderly maumer, an important-looking driver, and a dapper little mulatto tailor, whose spruce appearance and improved speech showed city training.

The room, extending over the whole east wing of the house, was lighted by two projecting dormer windows, set so high in the sloping roof that three steps led to each. One end of the room was filled with shelves, piled with the thick woollen cloth, called "Welsh plains," with blue and brown homespun, red flannel and blankets. The other sides were occupied with presses, chests and trunks, containing the hoards that insensibly collect in a house inhabited for many generations by wealthy people. In one chest were the stiff brocades of Mr. Selwyn's mother and grandmother; in another the blue and buff Revolutionary uniform of his father; in a third the plum colored velvet Court suit, lace ruffles and full bottomed wig of his grandfather, who had been a Colonial Governor. In a curious old wardrobe of almost black mahogany, with many little brass handled drawers, lay the soft, clinging, India muslin robes which Mrs. Selwyn herself had worn in her youth, with the little three inch waists which always excited Janet's amazement, at any one over six years old having ever been able to get into them.

At one press the young girl looked with reverential sadness, for she knew that it held the garments of her own "pretty mamma," as she had been taught to call her, the silks and laces with which her fond parents had adorned their darling for her bridal, little thinking how soon they were to be exchanged for a shroud. Then, too, there were chests of papers, old letters, surveys of "Indian lands" and "unexplored territories" and wills, which would have rejoiced an antiquary, and made the fortune of an historical society. But for these Janet was too young to care, and no inquiring spirit had ever penetrated to the Ashurst paper chests. Janet, indeed, was too familiar with all these things to pay them much attention now, when her head was full of her own plans, and after having shaken hands with the two old negroes, and acknowledged the tailor's bow by a nod, she mounted the window steps and perched herself on the highest, while driver and nurse ejaculated in chorus, "Kye, missy grow fine, same like he ma!"

Mrs. Selwyn was too much occupied to heed her granddaughter.

The driver held in his hand a stick on which were many notches of various sizes; these were to signify how many of the men under his charge were large, how many middle, and how many small-sized, and he and his mis-

tress were both endeavoring to impress upon the tailor the advantage of making the coats with wide fronts and roomy armholes, while that snip who had served his apprenticeship to a city tailor and thought he knew far more than either of his instructors, talked of rules and measures and slopes in a superior manner. At length, however, his arrangements were made. The bales of light woollen stuff were unrolled, measured and cut, buttons, thread and needles were provided, and then the seamstress had her turn for the women's clothes of striped blue homespun—clothes, which when cut, each woman was expected to make for herself, helped if needs were by the seamstress and her girls; only for the new born babies Mrs. Selwyn provided carefully made garments, not trusting their comfort to their mothers' clumsy fingers.

Now, if Janet had been a thoughtful young person, she would as she sat on her step have noticed how much method and arrangement there was in all this, and have wondered at the quiet, easy way in which this calm old lady was ordering and providing, months beforehand, for the wants of three hundred people; but Janet was, as we said, too used to it to be struck by the administrative faculty displayed, and only wished that Daddy Zeno and Mom Affy (Anglice, Minerva) would hurry, and let her make her request. At length, however, the clothes business was finished, and before the plantation nurse succeeded with her audience, Janet struck in.

"Dear grandma, I am going over to Buckstone for my lessons, and please let me stay to-morrow; it will be Saturday, you know, and Herr Müller will have time to play for me in the morning, and we shall have a dance at night."

"A dance at night," echoed Mrs. Selwyn. "Why then when will you come back?"

"On Sunday, grandma; I can meet you at church and come home. Don't you think that we had better fix regular days for my going to Uncle Ralph's, for since *she* lets me stay I must be honest and work, you know. Tuesdays and Fridays I think will be best."

"Very well, my pet, if you like it; and you can stay this week, only next Friday you must bring the Buckstone girls home with you, and the boys can come over on Saturday."

"That's my own grannie," said Janet, kissing her. "Any commands for Aunt Caroline?"

"No—only—yes, Cupid brought in two fine turkeys this morning, you can take one over, and a leg of that lamb, (they have very few sheep at Buckstone,) and—"

"Mercy, grandma," Janet broke in laughing. "You know Zack will have my valise and books, and there are limits to even Dimple's carrying powers, don't give him anything more."

"Well, well, go and put on your habit," said the grandmother, as gathering up her keys, she prepared to descend to her well-stocked storeroom.

Half an hour later, Janet, mounted on her pretty highbred mare, Queen Mab, was cantering along a shady country road, followed by a servant with a small valise strapped behind his saddle, a large wild turkey tied by the legs hanging at his left side and a basket of fresh butter on his right arm—the young lady herself, in mercy to his over-loaded condition, having hung the leather satchel containing her books on her own pommel. Janet went her way gaily, but her squire soon found something wrong with his steed, which was not the steady going Dimple, but a spirited young horse which the coachman had ordered him to take out for exercise. Embarrassed with his basket, and especially with the turkey, which thumped uncomfortably, as he galloped his horse to keep up with Queen Mab, Zack did not at first venture to dismount, but finding the gait become worse and worse, he at last reined up and found that one shoe was so loose that it rattled on the hoof, while it was at the same time too tight to be pulled off. Zack lifted up his voice and houted.

"Miss Janet! oh, Miss Janet! Come back. Robin Hood da gwine lame, an' him can't go fast no mo'."

"What is the matter!" asked Janet, coming back. Zack explained. The risk to the horse increased with every step that it took. "Massa" would be "firy mad" if any harm came to it, and he (Zack) knew not what to do.

Janet decided instantly.

Zack must get down and lead Robin Hood home at a walk, while she herself went on alone to Buckstone, and he must bring over her things on another horse as soon as possible.

Zack demurred. His young mistress had been his especial charge on horseback whenever it did not suit her grandfather to accompany her ever since he had led the pony on which, at five years old, she had taken her first ride, and to leave her thus alone in the woods was to him a monstrous idea. He entreated her to return home also.

Janet was positive. "What in the world should harm her? She knew everybody, black and white, in the neighborhood, and as for the Queen, she could manage her any day;" and the young sovereign rode off repeating the order: "Get off, and lead him every step of the way home." An order which Zack obeyed negro fashion by dismounting when he came in sight of the Ashurst gates.

CHAPTER V.

"Standing with reluctant feet

Where the brook and river meet,

'Twixt womanhood and childhood sweet."

[Longfellow.]

Janet, enjoying the adventure of being for once an "unprotected female," rode safely on until she reached a wide shallow stream

which crossed the road. Here Queen Mab stopped to drink, but finding the water muddy stepped aside from the usual track, to a deeper, clearer pool. The girl looked round enjoying the first faint signs of spring, and repeated aloud,

"The bud is in the bough, and the leaf is in the bud,
And earth's beginning now in her veins to feel—"

when she broke off, exclaiming: "Oh, there is that Dionea, which dear old Muller has been raving about! How early for it! Now, I shall have the pleasure of presenting a really valuable specimen for his beloved Hortus siccus."

So saying she turned her horse, and forced it to go some yards along the bed of the stream, to where she saw the coveted plant growing in the swampy ground on the margin. The water became deeper, and Mab stepped cautiously, but her mistress drawing up her knees, and twisting her skirt, with the skill of a country rider, kept on until within reach of the Dionea, and then making the long lash of her whip into a loop, she threw it lasso like over the head of the plant, intending with a jerk to break its brittle stem and draw it to her. Just, however, as with an angler's art, she had thrown her cord to the exact spot, her mare started violently to one side with a bound which would have unseated most people, and plunging backwards into water nearly to its shoulder, stood trembling in every limb. Janet kept her seat, but lost her whip, the stem, stouter than she imagined, having jerked it from her hand. Greatly amazed she strove to coax the trembling mare forward; but hand and voice were alike useless; the terrified creature stood with its forefeet stretched and braced, its neck stiff and eyes intently staring.

Janet now perceived a large snake, which, coiled around a slight sapling on the other side of the stream, was alternately darting and withdrawing its head and forked, blood-red tongue as the reed swayed back and forth. The mare, fascinated and terrified, was deaf to Janet's voice, and although she struck with hand and heel, stood still, trembling. "Oh Queeny," she cried at last, "don't be such a goose! You a country horse to be so afraid! It's only a water moccasin! Come Mab, my pet, come!" But Mab was deaf to blandishments and callous to blows, and Janet's next expedient of kneeling on her saddle and trying to snatch a switch from the trees overhead failed, for the boughs were too high for her to reach. In attempting this, too, she ran great risk of slipping off into the water, where, as she sagely bethought herself, it was quite possible that some of the snake's family might be concealed.

Reseating herself, she resumed her endeavors and wished for Zack; but now to her great joy she heard horse hoofs approaching, and in another moment saw a horseman, who would have crossed at the road without seeing her, so far down the stream had her indiscreet

botanical zeal carried her, had she not cried loudly:

"Here! here! help! come this way please."

The rider turned, and beholding to his amazement a young lady, a few yards off, up to her saddle girths in water, rode up exclaiming:

"What is the matter? What are you doing down there?"

"I am doing nothing at all," cried Janet, in answer. "I can't get my horse to move. Don't you see that she is afraid of that snake?" pointing.

"I see, I see," answered the new-comer, and turning his own horse's head away from the threatening reptile, he came close to Queen Mab, and laid one hand on her bridle, passing the other several times over the eyes of the trembling creature, which made no resistance, and relaxed its stare of horror.

"I will lead her out," said the stranger, "and do you pat and speak to her as I move off; this is a case of fascination."

They did as he said, and Mab reassured apparently by the presence of one of her own species, pressed close to his horse's side, and although still trembling was no longer restive.

The stranger continued to hold the rein and to speak soothingly to the mare until they had left the water and turned a bend in the road which shut it entirely from sight, then loosening his hold he looked anxiously at the young girl, asking:

"And you, are you hurt, wet or frightened?"

"A little wet, thank you," she answered smiling, (she was soaked to the waist,) "but that will do no harm. No, neither of us is at all hurt, and I can't tell why Mab should have been so frightened, for she must have seen snakes often before."

"Certainly, but it seems to be only occasionally that they exercise this power of fascination. I never knew of it before—with so large an animal, and I don't think that any one understands much about it. Will your horse stand fire?"

"Like a rock," answered the girl proudly. "You can shoot from her back."

"Mine will not, as I know to my cost, or rather," (correcting himself gallantly) "to my gain, since for that reason I am here. Would you do me the favor to hold him a moment for me?" dismounting as he spoke, and unslinging a gun which she then for the first time noticed hung across his shoulders. Leaving her, he returned towards the stream, and in a minute she heard the sharp crack of a rifle. The next she heard her new friend call:

"Turn your head this way, please, but don't turn your mare."

She looked back and saw him standing holding the snake, dead, hanging across a stick.

"Shot dead," he cried triumphantly. "Sweet is revenge. Don't you enjoy the sight of your enemy?"

"I'm afraid I do," she answered, hesitating—

ly, "for although I try not, I do hate snakes, not only this one, but all; but of course I know it is wrong."

"Wrong," said he, tossing the reptile into the bushes and remounting. "Why do you think it wrong?"

"Grandmamma," said the girl simply, "says it is wrong to hate any of these dumb creatures. Of course, we can't love all alike, but she does not like me to hate any, for she thinks them all God's work and innocent of harm; but these are to me horrible, and like all base things—meanness, falsehood, hypocrisy!"

"No," answered the young man gloomily; "your grandmother is right. These poor beasts do not deserve hate; it must be kept for *man*. He is the type of those vices."

Janet looked startled, and, her companion recovering himself, smiled, saying, "Disagreeable philosophy! And now may I inquire where you were going all alone when you got into his snakeship's pond? and if it is usual that a young lady in these parts

"Like a book-bosomed priest should ride?"

pointing to the satchel, which, to save it from the water, Janet had hung round her neck.

The question, the look, the tone, suddenly reminded Janet that she *was* a young lady, and that, moreover, her new friend was a young man whom she had never seen in her life before, and to whom she had been chattering in the frankness of her heart, as she would have done to one of her cousins. A rush of that uncomfortable self-consciousness which makes the misery of early girlhood, and which Janet had hardly yet known, seized her; she turned crimson, her whole manner changed, and she said hesitatingly:

"I am not a young lady, at least—I mean—I am going to my uncle's to school; these are my books which I had to take from the pommel to keep them dry," restoring the bag to its place as she spoke. "There was a plant down the stream which I wanted to get, so I went in after it, and then Mab got frightened, and I dropped my whip, and—"

The young man saw the blush and the sudden shyness, and was vexed with himself for having provoked it; he answered gently:

"You dropped your whip? Why did you not tell me? I would have got it for you."

"Oh, no!" she said, shuddering. "You could not; the water was deep, and there may be more snakes."

"I went in pretty deep to get a good aim at this one," he answered, looking down; and she then noticed for the first time that he had evidently been waist deep in water. This still increased her misery, for she thought that he had done it on her account.

"Oh, how wet you are!" she cried piteously, quite forgetting that she herself was in almost as bad a plight. "You must go home at once and get dry things."

"That is just what I can't do, unless, indeed, you can help me," he said, laughing. "You know I told you that my horse would

not stand fire. I did not know it, and attempted to shoot from the saddle this morning. She sent me flying over her head in a second, and then ran away, and, before I could catch her again, the other men had gone off, and now I haven't the least idea of the road. Perhaps you can tell me how far we are from the Elms, Mr. Vincent's place?"

"Very near, indeed; if you will come down this crossroad you will see the corner of his fence." She turned down the crossroad as she spoke, and then, pointing to a distant fence, added: "Follow the fence for half a mile in that direction, and you will come to his gate."

"But I mean to see you safe home, or wherever you are going, first," he said. "Indeed, you must allow me, and"—

"No, no!" said Janet hurriedly. "No, I can't, indeed. I had a great deal rather go alone," with an accent of the sincerest truth. "I am not far from Buckstone, now, and don't want you at all. Do, pray sir, go on to the Elms at once. Thank you, very much, and good-bye."

It was the stranger's turn to flush now; he looked hurt, but only answered: "If you insist," halted his horse and raised his hunting cap. She bowed, and turned her horse's head, then, ashamed of her own confusion, said to herself: "Oh, Janet! what an unmannerly little fool you are," and turning back again said, with a pretty youthful dignity:

"You must go home now, sir, because you are so wet, but I hope that I shall see you again. I am Miss Berkley, and my grandfather, Mr. Selwyn, will wish to thank you for helping me to-day. Will you tell me your name?"

He bowed low, and answered, "My name is Hugh Carlton, Miss Berkley, and I am staying here with my cousin, Mr. Vincent; but I beg that you will say no more of the slight service which I have done to-day."

"Thank you again," she answered, bending her head, and then finally rode away.

Hugh Carlton stood looking after her. "Now I wonder," said he to himself, "which is the real person? The school-boy that I pulled out of the water, or the miss in her teens that blushed so awfully, or the princess that bade me that stately adieu? They're 'wondrous pretty' all of them. I think I like the first best, but I mean to see those clear grey eyes again, and I'll try a plunge at that whip to-morrow."

The noise of Queen Mab's feet brought a crowd of eager boys and girls to the Buckstone porch.

"Here is Janet come at last," cried one.

"What makes you so late?" asked another.

"And you are all muddy and wet."

"Where's Zack?"

"Mab is all in a foam"—this last from a boy.

"Hush children, don't make such a noise!" said a pleasant looking, middle aged lady, who came forward.

"Why Janet, my child, you are really soaked!"

"Only my habit, Aunt Carry. I kept up my feet. Somebody must lend me a frock until Zack comes. Yes—I've had an adventure."

"An adventure between Ashurst and Buckstone!" cried Allan Selwyn, her eldest cousin. "Tell it Jeannie! What is it?" as they led her into the hall.

"Tell it," echoed the party.

"Yes, I have indeed—been drowned—almost, in Vincent's Creek—and attacked by a dragon, and rescued by a knight in chain mail, with a sword by his side, mounted on a superb charger! Afterwards he slew the dragon and laid its body at my feet. Isn't that an adventure? Am I not a new Sabrina? Is not my hero a St. George?"

"A dragon, Janet?" said little Sophy Selwyn, in an awe-struck voice. "A true-for-true dragon!"

"Well, you might call it a snake."

"There's hardly water enough in Vincent's Creek to drown a cat," said Allan Selwyn contemptuously, "nor a snake in the country that could kill anything bigger than a blue-jay. If the knight matches the rest of the story, Janet, he is probably little Tom Johnson on his donkey."

"Allan does not like any one but himself to be Janet's knight," whispered little Sophy to her sister Lucy, who hushed her demurely and turned to listen to the more sober account which Janet was giving her mother.

"Hugh Carlton and a cousin of Mr. Vincent's," repeated Mrs. Selwyn; "yes, I remember that an aunt of Mr. Vincent's married in Maryland, and Carlton is a Maryland name. I daresay that this is her son."

"Mr. Vincent's aunt's son? Oh no, Aunt Carry. A young man, and very handsome."

"Grandson, perhaps," answered her aunt, laughing. "Go and put on a dry frock, you mischief. What do you know of very handsome?"

Mr. Ralph Selwyn, the half-brother of Janet's grandfather, and younger than he by twenty years, was a little clearer in his reminiscences than his wife. He remembered that Miss Vincent had married a Carlton, and was quite sure that this youth must belong to a third generation. "But I will find out to-morrow, Janet," he concluded, "for I will ride over to Vincent's and see this hero of yours."

"Just as if anybody couldn't have led the Queen out of a ditch," muttered Allan sulkily.

CHAPTER VI.

"And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine.
A being breathing thoughtful breath;
A traveller betwixt life and death."

[Wordsworth.]

The next day, however, proved so hopelessly rainy that Mr. Selwyn was obliged to

forego his courteous intention. All out-door plans were necessarily abandoned, and Janet, to Herr Muller's infinite delight, spent the whole morning with him, Saturday though it were, reading Schiller, practicing Beethoven, and lastly going patiently over page after page of the old man's beloved herbal.

"Ach, *fräulein*!" he exclaimed at last, "if I had you always how I should *enwise* you! It is you that have the light-befilled, heart-awakened soul! Yes, *fräulein*, your cousins, *Fräulein* Lucie and *Fräulein* Annie, they too are good and praise-befitting. But they learn—Ach, *Himmel*!—they learn their lesson; and it is a lesson. But thou, my little lady, thou learnest, and it is thine; thou learnest with thy spirit. Thou wentest in great waters to get the Dionea for the old man's book."

"Oh, no, indeed, Herr; it was only a little branch," Janet hastened to correct. But the old man went on enthusiastically.

"You went in great waters to give him pleasure, thou dear one! See my little lady, in thy life it will be always so. Much trouble thou shalt have, for thou wilt bear it for thy friends, but much joy shall be thine for thou art *simpatica*, yes *simpatica* thou art."

"Herr Muller," said Lucy, putting her laughing face in at the door. "We cannot have you turning Janet's head; when you and she get together you go into the clouds. Do come into the big hall and play for us. Mamma says that we can have a Virginia reel before dinner just for exercise."

"What was the old Herr saying to you?" said Allan, as they stood together at the foot of the dance, while the others were having their turn. "You look so grave and scared."

"Scared! No," said Janet rousing herself. "I was only thinking. He was telling my fortune, I believe. Promising me great sorrow and great joy."

"Well, most people do have good and bad luck at times, but why you?"

"He says great sorrow and great joy, for thou wilt bear them for thy friends, because thou art *simpatica*."

"Sim—what?"

"*Simpatica*. It's Italian, and means sympathizing—doesn't your Latin show you that? And I was just wondering if I am a very sympathizing person, for I don't think I am."

"Well, when Mr. Cannons puts his head a-one side, and squeezes their hands, and says 'Ah my dear Christian friends,' all the old ladies say, 'so sympathizing, my dear.' I hope you don't mean to go in for that sort of thing."

"I hope not," said Janet, laughing heartily, "and I am sure Herr Müller wouldn't like to have Mr. Cannons squeezing his hand. But he is so pleased at my having risked a ducking for his dear herbal, (it is a shame that none of you children will care about it,) that he tells me all sorts of fine things, and winds up with this 'thou art *simpatica*! After all I did it because I was interested in the flower, and to please myself just as much as to please him.'"

"Yes—" said Allan slowly, "but I think I see what he is driving at. You do get so interested about other people's business. Why if I have a good hunt it makes you jolly, and when we all had the mumps I declare I believe it hurt you as much as me."

"That was because I had had it already, and remembered the pain. And of course it is nice for you to have a good hunt—it makes it so pleasant."

"People can always find a reason, if they want one," answered Allan philosophically, "but its true. You are like that verse in *Ivry*,

'Mournful in our ills and joyous in our joy;'

and the Herr cares more for you than for all of us put together."

"Well, if I am, Rochelle, I'll make a rural crown, (out of pasteboard,) and come down to tea in it. To be compared to a whole city! Come along Allan, its our turn."

And off they flew, backwards and forwards, up and down the middle, turning and twisting, bounding and sliding, in that gayest of old fashioned dances. The old man the while, with his violin tucked under his chin and playing the blithest tunes, gazed at the dancers over his spectacles. What was he thinking of I wonder, as the bow slid over the strings, and the airs sounded in his ears, to which he had danced, in years gone by in the far off fatherland? Did he see the long gallopadés of the reel, and hear the American voices round him? Or were the forms before him the soft plump figures of the German *mädchen*, in the smooth whirl of the waltz, and were the tones those of the beloved tongue? Something of both, I fancy, for as he heard the familiar notes and saw the bright-faced boy talking eagerly to the girl at his side, and caught his upward confiding glance, the old man shut his eyes and there came before him a vision of his own youth.

"And he thought of the days that were long since by,
When his limbs were strong and his courage was high."

Of that last night when he, too, had stood, an eager boy of twenty, by a fair cousin, loved and loving. He remembered how they had swung round and round in that long, smooth, unending waltz, which none but Germans can accomplish; how they had parted with vows and tears, and she had given him one of her long yellow tresses, for the next day he and his fellow-students were to march out to strike one last, desperate blow for freedom against what then seemed the invincible power of Napoleon. Then came before his eyes the tumult of the day, the awful night, lying wounded and stark in the snow, with the corpses around him. Then long months of fever and pain in the French hospital, and then, worst of all, the return home—the amazement, rather than joy, of his reception, and the absence of the one longed-for welcome. The little mound in the church-yard, with the

low cross and the wreath on it. They had thought him dead, and she had died. Poor boy! his love was dead, his home cold, his country enslaved, and he wandered forth into the world with but one resolve—never to go back. After years of travel, gathering lore, but little gear in every quarter of the globe, fate had led him here to this kindly, merry Southern home, where they liked him well and treated him with all respect, but still did not love him until Janet came. She, with her fine nature, her faculty of entering into the feelings of those about her, saw at once the loneliness and lovingness of the man, the tender, warm heart under the rugged exterior, and in a few months' time was, as Allan truly said, dearer to him than the whole tribe of Selwyns, his pupils for three years.

All this flashed through his brain, while his fingers mechanically played on, and when at last he opened his eyes, and looking down the long hall, saw Janet looking at him, and smiling as she met his glance, he exclaimed involuntarily:

"Dear God! She is like Clärchen! I never saw it before."

In truth it was not so. Clärchen had had the soft plump roundness, the pale yellow hair, the white skin, the sweet blue eyes of Germany. Janet, in her undeveloped girlhood, was slight and tall as the young sapling that may yet make a stately tree; her skin was fair and transparent, but lacked the snowy Teutonic whiteness; her hair had no tinge of yellow, but was softest Saxon brown. Her eyes were the purest, clearest gray, with no tint of blue, but with long lashes, many shades darker than her hair, which threw into them such dark shadows, that in shade or in grief they looked black too, while in sunshine or in joy they sparkled diamond-gray. But after fifty years even the most faithful of lovers has but a dim memory of features and coloring, while the expression, the word of the soul speaking through the eyes—*that* is remembered; and it was the affectionate, seeking look—a look such as he had not met in all these fifty years—which deceived the old man; for Janet was thinking, "He is playing for us to give us pleasure, and we do nothing for him—he is a stranger in everything—I wonder if he is thinking of his own people."

Strange power of sympathy! granted to few, and when granted but a doubtful good! for whether is it better to feel not *for*, but *with* others, and thus share the joys and the woes of many, or to bear alone, enjoy alone, one's own hap? Who can answer?—Of all gifts surely the most Godlike—but the only *human* God was the man of many sorrows.

And so the old man thought her like his dead love, and as he saw the gay boy seize her hand and lead her through the dance, he thought to himself: "Poor young things! The dear God grant they may be happy! He is a good boy, yet not worthy of my *fräulein*. But if she thinks so! Heaven be praised, their lot is in a land of peace, where are no

wars or bloodshed." Ah! if the prophetic vision had been granted to the good Doctor what would he not have seen! Allan Selwyn lying on his face, dead, on the hills of Gettysburg, with the broken sword still clenched in his stiffening hand; and Janet, a pale, stern woman, with her children clinging to her knees, looking in the wintry night at the ruins of her burning home. But these days of horror were still far off. No shadow of the war cloud yet darkened the air, and long ere it gathered the quiet pines were waving their green tops over the stranger's grave in the churchyard of his adopted home.

CHAPTER VII.

"La Reyne le veult."

Sunday morning rose clear and bright. The whole Buckstone household was stirring betimes, for, as Mrs. Selwyn said, it was no easy matter to get so many children, servants and horses fed and dressed in time to drive nine miles before half-past 10 o'clock.

"Another piece of omelette, if you please Uncle Ralph," said Janet, holding out her plate. "I am desperately hungry and must make haste to start in time for church. Steady is so slow! Whip I never so hard, nothing can make him go over four miles an hour."

"What have you got to do with Steady?" asked her uncle. "Why do you not ride Mab?"

"I promised the Herr last night to drive him. Quite made up my mind," she added with a positive little nod, as an outcry arose from the younger part of the family. "Yes, quite. I really wish it. You should have heard the music that he was playing for me last night in the book-room before tea. Such solemn, magnificent, beautiful church music! I have set my heart upon getting him to church to-day in the right humor to play it there, and you know, if he goes with one of you boys he is capable of anything, from a jig to Old Hundred."

"It's a shame, Janet," cried Lucy. "You let the Herr eat you up. What does it signify now he plays? Let one of the boys drive him. Only think what a delightful ride we shall have."

"My dear child, you must not think of it," said Mrs. Selwyn. "If the boys worry him in the buggy, I will ask him to go in the carriage with me."

Janet privately wondered if her aunt imagined, that to be shut up in a carriage with four small children, kicking his shins and plunging over his knees, was soothing to an irritable musician, but she only declared that she very much preferred her own plans, and rose to go, undeterred by Annie's suggestion that her habit would look very queer in the buggy.

"I don't mind," she said. "Tom says that he can ride on my saddle, and I must go in my habit, for there will be nobody to take Mab home from church if I don't; and now we must be off."

Before going, however, she said a word to Allan on the piazza, imperiously.

"See here, Allan," she began, autocratically, "you must drive Herr Müller home from church; yes you must. I can't have him worried and fretted by Tom or Jack just when he has been made happy and peaceful in church. Let him have one whole pleasant day, do, like a dear good fellow."

"The boys are a torment, but why the deuce can't Lucy or Annie drive him home? I meant to ride back to Ashurst with you and dine. I haven't seen my uncle for a fortnight," said Allan, insinuatingly.

"Lucy and Annie will have their heads so full of the Miss Vincents' new bonnets that there won't be a word of sense to be got out of them," replied the tyrant. "You must do it, Allan, for you are the only one that I can trust, and I know that if you promise, you will be good."

"And you know that if you ask me I have to promise," grumbled the boy; "but it's hard lines on a fellow, Janet, to give up a whole Sunday like that."

"Hard lines, Allan," she said, looking up into his face with sweet, beseeching eyes, and then glancing round at the bright, sunny lawn before them; "hard lines to give an old man a little pleasure? Look how delightful everything is to us, because it is our country, and we are together, and, then, think how lonely, how far from his own people he is! I wish that we could make him feel a little more as if he were one of us, and not just 'a stranger and a sojourner,' for, indeed, Allan, the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places!"

"I'm a beast!" said Allan, penitently, "and I'll do it, Jeannie, and with a good grace, for your sake."

"You are my good boy, and you'll do it for goodness' sake," she said, giving him an encouraging pat on the arm. "And next Friday you are to come to Ashurst, and stay over Sunday. Yes, really, for I asked Aunt Carry, and she said yes!"

Herr Müller and Janet drove happily along, but, as she had predicted, they were soon passed by the others, notwithstanding their early start. First by the gay crew of riders, mounted for the most part on small, shaggy ponies—"marsh tackies"—among which the high-bred Queen Mab looked like a princess among peasants, and next by the large family carriage, in those days yept "a rockaway." In this roomy vehicle were stored away Mrs. Selwyn, a maumer and four small children, and Mr. Selwyn drove himself, with his coachman on the box beside him. Allan checked his horse by the side of the buggy, and seemed inclined to attach himself to it; but this formed no part of Janet's programme, and she gave a sign which made the young

gentleman spur on to overtake his sisters' ponies.

Herr Müller looked after the riders with some apprehension, for Tom, a grinning urchin of ten, was playing all sorts of tricks on his side-saddle. "If he his neck should break, you will yourself repent, *fräulein*," he remarked.

"His neck!" said Janet, in astonishment. "Dear Herr, you *can't* break a boy's neck! He is much more likely to hurt Mab's back, rocking about as he is doing. However, the saddle is well stuffed, and I don't think he can do much harm."

At last they arrived at the church, later, indeed, than most of the congregation, but still in time for the Doctor to arrange his music before the service began, and for Janet to pounce upon her grandfather, and drawing him from the group of old gentlemen, with whom he was discussing cotton and politics, give him a hurried account of her adventure, and ask him to be introduced to the hero of it, and thank him properly; "for you see, grandpapa, I am afraid that I was rather rude."

"I don't understand," said the old gentleman, testily. "What is all this story about Vincent's Creek and a snake? Surely you're not afraid of snakes, child! and what the deuce were you doing in a pond, besides?"

"I can't explain any more now, grandpapa," said Janet, almost ready to cry, as she saw a neighbor approaching, evidently to interrupt them, "but I should have been ducked or drowned if he had not helped me, and I told him you would thank him for me. He is Mr. Vincent's cousin, and his name is Carlton."

"Are you scolding your granddaughter, Selwyn?" said old Mr. Moore coming up to them. "What mischief have you been in, Miss Jeanie? Stealing sweetmeats or tearing your frock? You look penitent."

"Getting my feet wet," answered Janet laughing, and she went to join her grandmother.

The old dark church under the spreading oaks, with the cheerful groups clustered around it in the bright March sunshine, was a pretty sight. A little withdrawn into the wood the servants were busy with the horses, taking them from the carriages and tying them to the trees, so to remain during church time in charge of some of the younger negroes, while the elder or more devout hastened to take their places in church on the benches on the "colored side" of the building.

This was itself much larger than the present congregation required. It had been originally square in shape, built of the small dark brown bricks which used in Colonial times to be sent out from England, but the square had been broken two generations before by two small semi-circular projections, thrown out at the east and west ends. The one, intended to form a chancel, which had hitherto stood in the most unorthodox way against the north wall; the other to hold an organ, the

gift of Mr. Selwyn's grandfather. This said organ, a queer little old thing, was together with a bell which hung in an odd pepper-box tower to the north, the pride of the whole neighborhood. None of the other country churches in the State had either organ or bell and St. George's valued itself accordingly. True the bell was cracked, and the organ had been, until a short time previous, fearfully discordant, but as these defects were comfortably attributed to injuries received from the British in the Revolution, they were generally considered a dignity the more.

So, too, the church books, which had been carried off to London and recovered in a very remarkable manner, were so sacred in the eyes of the congregation that although the pages were torn and the print indistinct from time and much use, it was quite impossible to reconcile them to the idea of any others being used; and poor Mr. Cheshire, the rector, being somewhat dim sighted, was fain to conceal a small unbound Prayer-book within the heavy crimson and gold volume, which he sometimes complained was the only outward and visible sign of the Protestant Episcopal Church to most of his parishioners. Within, the church was divided into four equal parts, by the aisles which crossed it, the pulpit and reading desk filling the north end of the main aisle, and thus fronting the south door, which indeed was now the only one, as those at the east and west had of course been closed by the erection of the chancel and organ loft.

Above the pulpit still blazed the royal arms. They had been whitewashed over during the Revolution, but when the feeling of love and reverence for the old returned to mitigate the warmth of republican fervor, a zealous antiquarian had overcome the political scruples of his fellow-worshippers; the whitewash had been removed, and the colors proving bright, the gold-collared lion and unicorn still held their shield, with the proud motto, "*Dieu et Mon Droit*" above the clergyman, who prayed Sunday after Sunday for "the President of these United States."

On the walls were a few monuments, mostly slabs of dingy gray marble, many of them surmounted by coats of arms to "Anthony B—, Gentleman of this Province, and Margery his wife," and others, their friends and neighbors, frequently mentioning the English county or estate from which the good folks had come.

Also, there was one wooden construction at which the children looked with awe, for they knew that it meant that somebody was dead; and although the somebody had been dead for more than a hundred years, yet the fact of seeing it thus specially set forth, gave the dead man a curious sort of vitality in their young minds. It was in fact a hatchment, with the shield reversed, and other devices which were intended to announce, although their signification was faint to republican eyes, that Fulke Handon, Knight, had died the last of his race.

The pews, high, square oak boxes in which

the children stood on tiptoe in order to gaze at these things, had not been altered when the chancel was thrown out, and to the despair of one or two of the congregation who were beginning to take an interest in the ritualistic movement, many stood with their backs to it. They, the pews I mean, were all in the eastern part of the church, for when the white population of the parish had dwindled and the black increased, those on the west had been removed and the space filled with rows of high backed benches for the accommodation of the negroes.

These, however, were seldom occupied by any but the coachmen and footmen who came with their masters, and by a few "upper servants" who thought that it suited their dignity to appear there; the great body of "the people" preferring the more emotional services of the Methodists and Baptists, who had large wooden churches in the neighborhood.

All the time that the congregation was talking without, the sexton, a solemn looking old negro, (the effect of whose grave black suit was somewhat impaired by the red worsted cap which he wore for the "rheumatic in de head") perched on a ladder supposed to be concealed against the north wall, was pulling at a long rope, which, hanging from the pepper-box tower before mentioned, set the bell in motion. No one thought of objecting to its cracked jangle, but the outraged echoes must have rejoiced when Mr. Ralph Selwyn, the church warden, looking at his watch, went round and waved his hand to the old man on the ladder. With one final clang the bell stopped, the talk died away, and the first notes of the organ, (which had been repaired upon the discovery of Herr Müller's musical talent,) were heard, inviting all listeners to enter.

CHAPTER VIII.

"On to God's house the people prest;
Pa-sing the place where each must rest,
Each enter'd like a welcome guest."

[Tennyson.

Janet was rewarded. The old Herr in his happiest mood was drawing such sweet, solemn sounds from his poor little instrument as it had never produced before. Even the most careless were struck and delighted, and Allan looked at Janet with full forgiveness of her gentle tyranny.

Now Janet was a good girl, and moreover a good churchwoman, as it behooved a daughter of the Cavaliers to be, nevertheless it must be owned that her thoughts wandered sadly as soon as the cessation of the voluntary unchained her attention. She tried hard to think of the service, and made her responses duly, but she could not help wondering whether nothing more interesting than the Miss Vincent's new bonnets was to be seen in their pew that day. When at last she had almost ceased to think about it, Mr. Vincent, a portly

old gentleman about the same age as her grandfather, entered, followed by "the Knight of the Frogpond," as Allan had scornfully dubbed him. The Vincent pew was behind the Selwyn, and Janet had only time as they passed to be sure that it was her hero, the change from a green hunting suit to the deepest mourning that a man can wear puzzling her for the moment. He it was however undoubtedly, and as soon as the blessing was pronounced she whispered:

"That is he, grandpapa, and, indeed, I was a bear."

"Hey, Vincent! you were late to-day," said Mr. Selwyn, going up to his contemporary as they went out.

"Very late. My young cousin, here, was with me, and we rode round to see his grandfather's old place, Deerlawn."

"I am right, then. This gentleman is your Aunt Ellinor's son?"

"Son! You forget, Selwyn. My aunt has been dead these thirty years. This lad is her grandson. Here, Hugh! Let me introduce you to one of my oldest friends, Mr. Selwyn, of Ashurst."

"Where I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you, Mr. Carlton," returned Mr. Selwyn. "I remember your grandmother well. Was in love with her myself, as a small boy; half the men and boys in the country were. I remember being very miserable when she married and went away. However, I meant to speak not of your grandmother, but of my granddaughter. She tells me that you helped her out of an ugly scrape the other day. I am exceedingly obliged to you."

Hugh bowed, and "hoped the young lady had not suffered," a fact of which his own eyes had already assured him.

"Not at all! not at all. Will you both come and dine with me to-morrow?"

Hugh was to leave early the next morning.

"Then come to-day," said Mr. Selwyn, warmly. "Vincent, you won't object to Sunday, and will trust to Mrs. Selwyn's larder. I think there is some of that old Madeira left still."

"I will take my chance of Mrs. Selwyn's housekeeping at any time. Any objection, Hugh?"

"None, sir. It will give me great pleasure."

"That's right. Now come along and be introduced to Mrs. Selwyn; Janet you know already."

The congregation dispersed. Mrs. Selwyn drove off in her old-fashioned coach, round-bodied, and mounted on high springs, with no other companion than her old housekeeper, on the front seat; her husband taking a horse from a servant and riding with his granddaughter and guests.

For a time all four rode abreast, but when they turned from the main road the two elders went ahead, letting the young people follow them. Janet felt a strong return of shyness, but did her best to conquer it, as her companion said, smiling:

"You promised me that your grandfather should thank me for that immense deed of mine, you know—but, you see, he has asked me to dinner besides. That was more than you bargained for."

"Oh! that has nothing to do with me," she answered, hastily. "He was sure to do that as soon as he found out that he had known your grandmother."

"Rather a severe test of friendship. What, all one's acquaintances' grandsons? A dweller in cities would hardly agree to that."

"If they were like grandpapa they would."

"People like your grandpapa don't dwell in cities. I suppose that long domination and broad acres are necessary to produce a development like that."

"Are they," said Janet, simply. "They don't always produce it, though. John Hewson has a great deal more land than grandpapa, and he is as mean a man in every way as well can be."

"Perhaps he is not

'A long descended laird of Ayr.'"

"Oh yes he is. Did not you see their monument in church? 'Christopher Hewson, Gentleman of this province, son of Sir Nathaniel Hewson, Oakdale Park, Norfolk, England.' That was his ever so many times off grandfather."

"Oh if you call in a monument to support your side! Yes, of course it is a prejudice, and a strong one. Still I did not mean that all the landed gentry have that style, only you seldom see it in others. And now let me ask you a question. Had you any idea of the depth of the water into which your botanical ardor led you?"

"Allan says it's not deep enough to drown a cat."

"Well, when I went back yesterday it would have drowned me if I had not known how to swim, and Mr. Vincent tells me that it is known as Dead Man's Pool, because some unfortunate (not very sober probably) was once found floating in it."

"But not where we were?"

"Not a yard from Queen Mab's heels."

"Good gracious! What should I have done?"

"Why swimming in a riding habit would not be easy."

"Swimming at all would be impossible to me. I don't know how."

"Don't look so pale. I suspect that Mab's instincts would have kept her out of the deep hole, but still as they were rather obfuscated by the snake, she might—"

"Oh! I don't think she had any sense left. Dear me, I haven't been half grateful enough to you. You saved my life perhaps."

"A great deal too grateful. I had no notion that there was any danger, nor was there, to me. I only tell you now lest another Dionea should tempt you again."

"Oh never," she cried, with a shudder.

"But why did you go back?"

"For purposes of investigation. It took

two or three glorious 'headers' to bring this to light, and I am sorry to say broken."

"My whip," she cried eagerly, as he drew it from his pocket. "Oh I am so glad to get it again. Grandpapa had it made for me when his horse Rex won the great three mile race. Thank you very much; but how did you find it, and did you really go back into that horrid creek just for it?"

"A very good bathing place indeed—for a diver. And I found it just where you lost it, by the broken Dionea, but as you see in two pieces."

"Were there any more snakes?"

"No. I examined into that matter first. In fact I don't believe that ours was a true reptile. Probably a fairy masquerading to introduce us to each other."

"Very ungrateful of us to kill her then."

"You see I did not recognize her good intentions; perhaps it was unlucky. Fortunatus, I remember, fed his snake, and she rewarded him with the cap and rose. This one may do me some ill turn in retribution."

"I hope not," earnestly, "I'm sure not, or if she does, she must harm me too, for it was all on my account, and I was glad when you killed it."

"You promise, then, to share the fate?" he said, bending down smilingly to look into her eyes, expecting her to laugh and blush as an older girl would have done, but she met his look with the grave, truthful eyes of a child, and answered earnestly: "I should feel it only fair, if I could, to take all the punishment; it was all my doing—." Then, bursting into a merry laugh, she cried: "What nonsense we are talking! As if it were anything but a water moccasin! Here—this is the Ashurst avenue, and grandpapa is waiting for us."

"I believe the schoolboy is the real one," thought Hugh, somewhat vexed as they rode on, and joined their elder companions.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Selwyn had said to his friend:

"I beg your pardon, Vincent, but I thought that there was some coolness between your aunt's family and your own."

"So there was. Her husband (she herself did not live long, poor thing,) differed with my father about the settlement of their father's estate, and for years there was no communication whatever."

"Then how does this youngster come here?"

"We fell in with him two years ago when I took the girls to the Commencement at Harvard. We were actually introduced before either suspected who the other was. He behaved very well, kept in the background and quiet, but in the evening he came down to the Tremont, and sent in his card, asking if we would receive him. My wife said it was high time to let by-gones be by-gones, and we asked him in."

"Quite right, too. Then you asked him here?"

"Yes, and he told us how his father had

married in Mississippi and settled there, leaving Maryland altogether, which was the way that we had lost sight of them so completely. Then he wrote to his father, my cousin, you know, whom I had never seen, and he wrote to me, and the upshot of it all was, that we agreed to meet as relatives should. They were both to have come to us in the next vacation, but poor Carlton (the father I mean) died; and Hugh (he is named after my grandfather, Hugh Vincent Carlton,) had not the heart to come alone."

"He is a handsome, well mannered young fellow. No brothers or sisters?"

"None—there was one half-sister, weak minded, or simple, I suspect, but she died about the same time as the father; so he is quite alone, on his way now to Europe for the 'grand tour,' as we used to say in our day—'Ah! are those your sheep? What breed?' &c."

Mr. Selwyn and his guests had returned from an afternoon stroll to the stables where they had visited not only "Rex," victor of two hard won fields, but "Princess Royal," own sister to "Rex," whose triumphs were yet to come, a delicate highbred beauty of whom great things were expected by her owner. Mr. Vincent doubted—"bred too fine, not enough bone," was his opinion, but Mr. Selwyn (who, although as he never failed to remark, "was not on the turf," had always, like his fathers before him, one or two blood horses in his stable, and more than one piece of racing plate on his sideboard,) had great confidence in his own judgment and maintained the superiority of "pure strain" and "spirit" over the grosser advantages of bone and weight. Still discussing these absorbing topics, the gentlemen returned to the house, and there as the sun had not yet set, and the evening was mild, Mr. Selwyn ordered chairs and a small table placed in the piazza, that his friends might smoke a last cigar, and have a parting glass of wine, a stirrup cup, before taking leave.

It was a lovely evening. The first approach of spring made itself known by the warmth of the almost horizontal rays, which shot across the lawn and turned the white stone floor of the piazza into gold, while the wintry cold waited only for the disappearance of those rays to reassert its power. From one side the cows were returning from their pasture; from another the long white line of sheep came filing across the lawn to their fold. Everything was peaceful and tranquil, and from where he sat, Hugh Carlton could catch sight, through the open drawing room window, of Mrs. Selwyn's white, high crowned cap, as she leaned back in her chair, and could hear the clear low tones of Janet's voice, and even some words of the sermon, which she was reading aloud to her grandmother.

The peace, the calm serenity of the scene filled the young man's soul with a gentle sense of happiness. He looked back to painful days and events of his own life, which he

had thought would be ever present burning sorrows, and they seemed to be already fading into the past, the twilight land of long ago.

Not listening to his companions' talk, he began involuntarily to follow the sermon. It was upon the trials, the bitterness, the uncertainties of life. "Man heapeth up riches and cannot tell who shall gather them." "Watch, therefore, for no one knoweth when the Son of Man cometh." "We walk in the valley of the shadow of death." Such texts recurred again and again.

"A month, or even a week ago," said the young man to himself, "this sad, warning discourse would have chimed only too well with my own mood; but here, in this happy valley, amid this peaceful prosperity, it is hard to believe it. It is easier to think that these are the Fortunate Isles—that beyond that wood lies Avilion, that sorrow and pain find here no place."

So lazily dreaming as he lounged on his chair, he was aroused by hearing Mr. Vincent say sharply:

CHAPTER IX.

"Each Matin bell, the Baron saith,
Knells us back to a world of death."

[Coleridge.]

"Look, Selwyn! There is a fellow who has overridden his horse terribly. Is he one of your boys?"

"Not of mine. None of my boys would dare to bring in a horse like that," answered Mr. Selwyn, with quick interest, for to the Southerner horseflesh, though in a different condition, is as sacred as to the Norseman. "Why, he is whipping the poor beast again! Vincent, something—"

And, struck with the curious instinct of approaching calamity, the three men stood silently watching, as the rider, instead of following the sweep of the road, cut straight across the grass, and drew up his horse at the steps. Then, in a strange, hoarse voice, Mr. Selwyn said:

"I know him. George Berkley's coachman."

The man, almost as exhausted as the horse, stumbled up the steps, and taking off his cap, said, as he held out a letter:

"Master sent me, sir, and said, 'ride hard.'"

Mr. Selwyn took the letter, but exclaimed: "Say, boy, what is it?"

"It's—it's Mas' James, sir. No, sir, not dead, but—"

Mr. Selwyn had torn open the letter, and taking in its contents at a glance, dropped into his chair with a groan and covered his face with his hands.

"Selwyn—Good Heavens man—tell me what has happened—James Berkley? What is it?"

Mr. Selwyn silently held out the letter. Mr. Vincent took it and read—

"*My Dear Sir*—I am sorry to tell you that James has had a very severe accident. He went on board a ship which they were loading, fell through a hatchway into the hold, and hurt, they say, his spine. At first we did not know how serious the injury was, but he has become rapidly worse in the last three hours. Pray come at once and bring Janet: he has asked for her.

Yours truly, GEORGE BERKLEY."

On the outside of the envelope, in a lady's hand, were the words, "The doctor says lose no time."

Mr. Vincent read, gave the letter to Hugh, and putting his hand on Mr. Selwyn's shoulder said kindly,

"My old friend, it's a hard blow—but there are women in there, and no time to lose."

The old man rose instantly, with a face of that terrible gray hue which is the pallor of old age, and said quietly:

"True, thank you Vincent," turning to the servant, "Any other message, Jack?"

"Just that, sir. I was not to mind the horse and ride hard, and master said he would send horses to meet you at the Twenty Mile House. Missus wrote that on the cover, after I was mounted, for master, he couldn't leave Mas' James again."

At this moment Mrs. Selwyn and Janet, hearing the agitated voices, came out. Mr. Selwyn as hastily as possible told them what had happened, and gave the letter to Janet, saying to his wife:

"Get her ready to start in half an hour, in the dog cart, t'is the lightest; you must come to-morrow."

"In that open cart, and you will drive all night? Indeed, indeed you cannot."

"It will not be too cold for her, wrap her up well, your furs, blankets. I cannot risk a heavy carriage or take a servant, every pound tells on the pace."

"My dear, you forget how old you are! You cannot drive in the cold for so many hours."

"I can drive grandmamma," interposed Janet, who had stood as if stunned.

"I am young and strong. I will drive. Oh! do not let us talk, let us go at once."

"Right, Janet, get your cloak. Vincent, will you come to the stable with me?"

Meanwhile the servants, hurrying up, had learnt the news from the messenger, and already the stable boys were on the alert. Quick and sharp came the master's orders. "Zack, take the gray horses, ride on twenty miles, stop at the Club House, cool them off and give a little water. I will be only half an hour behind you. Caesar run out the dog-cart, put in the bays, (yes it's Mas' James,)" in answer to an affectionate inquiry from the white-headed coachman. "Abel—where's Abel? Saddle Robin Hood. No, Caesar, I can't take you. I must have a boy that can ride all night, and you must come with your mistress to-morrow. Be ready to start in twenty minutes and come up to the door."

"What can I do for you, Selwyn—I or my horses?"

"No one can help me," the old man cried, with a burst of anguish—then instantly repressing it, he added, "It is weakness, Vincent, but forgive it—you lost one of your sons once, and this is my only one."

Mr. Vincent made no answer but a silent pressure on the arm, and Mr. Selwyn added more calmly:

"Yes, if you can go, or send, to my brother Ralph to-night, give him George's letter and tell him that he must come in the morning, and bring my wife to town with his horses. Caesar, take care of Mas' George Berkeley's boy, Jack, and the horse, they are overdone."

They returned to the house and found Janet bonneted and cloaked, standing ready in the hall; her grandmother, with busy maids about her, was collecting wraps innumerable, and pressing the poor child to eat and drink before starting. Janet put aside the biscuits, but took the proffered coffee. Mr. Selwyn also took a cup and while he was drinking it, and Mr. Vincent was speaking with Mrs. Selwyn of her arrangements for the morrow, Janet turned and seeing Hugh's compassionate eyes fixed on her face went towards him, saying eagerly—

"Tell me. Do not you think that it may be a mistake—that he may get well?"

For an instant the desire to give relief tempted him sorely, but the pale face was too earnest for a false answer, or to be cheated with a hollow hope, and he replied sadly:

"I dare not deceive you—they say the spine, and it would be cruel kindness to bid you hope in that case. I fear you must expect the worst."

Paler she could not be, but the light died out of the eyes. The carriage came to the door, Mr. Selwyn got in, and Janet was clasped tearless in her grandmother's tearful embrace. Hugh took her hand to help her in.

"Forgive me," he said softly. "I could not say otherwise, and I know it all, for I have lost my father too. God help you."

"God help you," she answered, and they whirled away into the night.

All her life long Janet never forgot that journey. The long, long drive through the tall dark woods. No sound of man's making, only the steady tramp of horse's feet and the grind of the wheels through the sand. The strange weird noises of the forest, the creak and groan of the tree boughs, the hoot of the owls, the cries of the prowling nocturnal animals, darkness on either hand, the long white road stretching endlessly before, and overhead the stars, that had never looked so *hardly* bright or so far off before.

Not a word did either traveller speak until, at the end of the first twenty miles, they found Zack with the relay of horses, awaiting them, and as they drew up in the glare of the torchlight, Mr. Selwyn looked at his watch, and said, "Two hours and a quarter. Good time, Janet."

The ordinary commonplace remark so jarred upon her excited nerves, that with a gasp she burst into tears, to her great morti-

fication. "Cry, child; 'twill do you good," said the old gentleman, and he got down and walked about while the change of horses was being made. Then opening a flask of wine he poured out a little, and said,

"Drink it, Janet; you must be strong now."

She obeyed and ate a biscuit.

"I will drive now," she said, taking the reins, and off they went once more.

At the end of another twenty miles, George Berkley's servants and horses met them.

"No hope—lose no time," was all the message; an order obeyed to the letter, for when Mr. Selwyn drew up at his nephew's door, in the intense darkness that precedes the dawn, he was not without a certain sense of satisfaction at having done his sixty miles in seven hours' time.

Little thought Janet of that. Springing to the ground, she saw with increased dismay that the door opened before she could reach it, that the hall was filled with servants, and that all wore an expectant look—expectant of what? As she entered, her cousin, Mrs. George Berkley, came forward to meet her, saying eagerly, "Thank Heaven, my love, you are in time; he may know you, has asked for you twice." A low cry passed Janet's lips; she had never, in her inexperience, thought of the danger of finding him insensible, and she followed her cousin up stairs with trembling knees.

Mrs. Berkley opened a door and there lay her father. "Bonny King Jamie," his playmates had called him in his youth, and Bonny he was even now. Raised high on pillows, with his sunny hair untinged with grey about his brows, and a flush like that of health on his cheek, he looked so well, so handsome, that Janet could not believe in his danger. Darting past, she threw herself on her knees beside him, and seizing his hand cried, "Oh, papa, papa! You are not so ill, dear papa speak to me."

But no answer came; the eyes did not open, the hand move, the deep breathing continued unbroken; there was a movement in the room, and looking up she saw her stepmother opposite to her, Agnes and Mrs. George Berkley at the foot of the bed, and her grandfather entering on George Berkley's arm. Her stepmother said coldly,

"Control yourself, Janet, you must not disturb him." "She can do no harm," said a voice behind her, which she recognized as that of Dr. Wilcox, their physician. "I am disappointed; I thought from his having asked for her, so lately, that she might rouse him."

"He was not conscious," Mrs. Berkley replied.

"When, when did he ask?" cried Janet.

"Not more than half an hour ago."

"Only then," she replied in a tone of anguish, "he would have known me then. Papa, dear papa, here I am, don't you know me? Can't you hear me?" No sign came.

"It is I, Janet, your little Janet, your own, your love Janet," kissing his closed lids.

The eyelids opened vaguely, the fingers tightened on hers, and he spoke:

"Janet, love, are you come? Don't go away. Wife, where were you? I can't see you; oh, wife, stay with me, my Jeannie."

Then Mr. Selwyn broke into a sob, and cried:

"He takes her for his wife, my Janet. Oh, James, boy, are you going?"

But the darkening eyes, the deadening ears had no life for any voice, any name, but one, and with Janet's hand clasped in his, Janet's name, only to him, not her's, but that of his life-long love, her mother, on his lips, James Berkley's spirit parted.

The doctor raised the sobbing girl from the bed where she still lay, clasping the stiffening hand, saying kindly:

"My poor child, you must go, he does not need you now," and would have drawn her from the room; but seeing Agnes still immovable at the foot of the bed, she threw herself on her neck, crying,

"Oh, sister, our father, our father!" but Agnes drew back, saying,

"Your father," and turning, left the room.

CHAPTER X.

"* * * * his requiem is done,
The last deep prayer is said."

[Willis.]

"Yes, we buried him, and there was not a dry eye there, not a man of us all but had a sob in the throat as we shut the old vault on him; and Cousin Alfred, grand old fellow as he is, put his hand on little Geordie's head and said, 'I am glad that you have boys, George, and the old name won't die out,' and now to come home and find this cursed will."

The speaker was George Berkley, a stout man of forty, who, with his hands behind his back, strode up and down the room, talking to his wife, as she lay on a sofa by the fire.

"Very bad indeed," returned she. "I believe, on the whole, George, that, all things considered, I prefer disagreeable men."

"The devil you do!"

"Don't swear. Yes, I really do—now like you, for instance."

"Disagreeable!"

"Why, yes, of course; your temper now is none of the best, I must confess, but I don't think that you would ever make such a will as that."

"I hope not. At first we thought that it could not stand, but Elton and Burgess, whom we consulted at once, give us no hope of that. 'Hurried, but legal,' they say."

"How was it made?"

"The day after the accident, when the bad turn first came on, he told his wife what to

say, and she wrote it down, and then read it to Maxwell in his presence, he assenting. Maxwell took the directions home, and next day brought the will drawn up in form. He was conscious then, but did not speak. Maxwell read it over to him, and they called me and the two doctors into the room, and he bowed his head and signed it, and we signed as witnesses, but we did not hear it read."

"Oh! he 'bowed his head and signed,' did he? He would have signed your death warrant just as calmly then, I suppose, with that woman standing by. George, it was by compulsion!"

"How can you make that out?"

"How can you ask, knowing James so well? He did not dare refuse. You should have sent her out of the room."

"My dear! His wife!"

"Ah! I could go in for woman's rights when you talk like that. To be sure, just because she *was* his wife. Poor James was always governed by the person nearest to him, and you should have made Mr. Maxwell read him that paper, with those hard black eyes of hers out of sight."

"I hope that the jury will never be one of women's rights! Heaven help the unlucky woman brought up for trial then! Poor James's wife seems to me a harmless commonplace person, not quite like the rest of you—"

"I'm glad you see *that*."

"But not at all up to any such tricks as you seem to imagine."

"I haven't said a word of the sort."

"Oh, haven't you! She has full power now, anyway. All his property for life; no exception made for what he got with Janet's mother; the girls to live with her, and not to marry without her consent, under pain of forfeiting their share after her death."

"What, in perpetuity? Never to be old enough to choose their own husbands?"

"In perpetuity. But for that matter, when Janet is twenty-one she can do as she pleases; her grandfather will take care of that; but Agnes is totally dependent on her."

"Agnes rules her, and, as things now stand, will, through her, rule Janet."

"By-the-by, what sort of a girl is Agnes?"

"She is not a girl at all. A woman, and not a good one."

"Come, come Lotty, James's daughter, and so handsome."

"As you please, poor little Janet!"

"Dear little soul! So gentle and yielding! Just like James."

H—m! Reverse the quotation: 'As is moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine.'"

"How?"

"You don't really believe that Janet is that delightful good-for-nothing creature that James was?"

"Lotty! Lotty! Well, what is she?"

"She is a delightful, good-for-a-great-deal creature."

"Well! well! Yes, he was weak; but I

loved him all the more for it, Lotty." And the strong man's voice trembled.

"My dear old fellow!" she cried, springing up and throwing her arms around his neck. "I loved him, too, dear; but Janet will do better, for she will be strong so sweetly that people will love her strength. And now, tell me who is Mr. Maxwell? And how came he to draw the will?"

"His father was one of our people; but he died long ago, and his widow went back to the West, where she came from, and was quite lost sight of until last year old Mr. Crofts, when he went away for his health, met this son, who was very anxious to return here. Crofts was looking out for a partner, and took him, and now Crofts is so ill that everything goes into Maxwell's hands. He is a very clever fellow, and behaves very properly in all this painful affair."

"Oh!"

"What now?"

"Only that I don't like him, and that I think Mrs. James Berkley does."

"Why she cannot have seen him half a dozen times. Do you mean *anything*?" very sternly.

"No harm, George, but I happened to see Mrs. James and the lawyer talking together a few hours before James's death, and if they were not old acquaintances—"

"One of your absurd notions—quite impossible. But the point now is about Janet. Cousin Alfred swears he won't give her up, and how is it to be managed?"

How it was to be managed was indeed the question. If Janet had been capable of resistance, of claiming the right, at her age, to choose her own guardian, something might have been done; but the poor girl had fallen into a most unnecessary fit of repentance for fancied neglect of her father. She imagined that she had never loved or valued him as she should have done, and Mrs. Berkley, with ingenious hints and half uttered insinuations, so worked upon her feelings, that she accepted the order to remain under her control, as a sort of penance, by the patient endurance of which she might comply with his last desire and in some degree expiate her fault. From this resolve Mrs. Selwyn vainly tried to move her, and it was without her aid that the united forces opened their batteries upon Mrs. Berkley.

Mrs. Selwyn persuaded. "By the pain which she herself would feel if parted from Agnes," she besought her to give her her grandchild.

Mrs. Berkley was "forced to endure a pain the more; she, who had fancied herself dead to pain, in being obliged to refuse anything that her dearest aunt wished, but her husband's last command she could not, dared not, disobey. Any wish of his was sacred to her, how much so then, this his dying injunction!"

Mrs. Selwyn retired, baffled but unconvinced.

Mr. Selwyn, through Mr. Parkyns, bribed, offering to take all expense off Mrs. Berkley's hands and to renounce all claim on the

part of Janet to her mother's property, for Mrs. Berkley's life, if she were given up to him. If not, legal proceedings would be immediately instituted to recover it.

Mrs. Berkley hesitated, but thought that she could manage that later, and as there is one passion dearer to woman than gold or gear, she answered piteously: "Could Mr. Selwyn imagine that she would *sell* her child, or give for money what she had refused to her aunt's request?"

Mr. Parkyns retreated in confusion.

George Berkley argued "the Selwyns were Janet's natural guardians," &c.

Mrs. Berkley "could not pretend to argue on such a subject, and with such a mind. But there was one *fact* which perhaps Mr. Berkley was not aware of; she grieved to have to mention it, as it seemed like blaming Janet, but it was unhappily the case that the dear girl was inclined to be too entirely a Selwyn, to undervalue her father's family. It was sad but not unnatural, as she had been brought up so exclusively by her grand-parents; but it had always distressed her father, who wished her to love and reverence his own family as it deserved!"

"George Berkley, puzzled, thought that there might be something in it."

Mrs. George Berkley declined to take any active part in the attack. Her advice was that a lawyer should be retained. That Mr. Maxwell should be engaged to represent the case to Mrs. Berkley and influence her upon it. This advice not being accepted, the allied forces confessed themselves routed and abandoned the place, and as the planting season was upon them, Mr. Selwyn returned in great wrath to his fields, carrying off his wife and leaving the light of his house behind him.

Poor Janet! No one who then saw her for the first time would have believed that the name could ever be an appropriate one.

At first she moved about the house in her heavy black robes, as one in a trance of grief. Then, when impatient words and looks showed her that this annoyed her stepmother and sister, she endeavored to rouse herself and set herself with gentle diligence to please them, offering love and service, by every means in her power. But all in vain; her work they took, nay imposed, but by neither word or sign did they accept or return her proffered affection. Soon she began to see that this was what was intended, and felt daily more strongly the icy barrier that divided her from them, and which never allowed her to forget that she was with, but not of them—a presence to be endured, not enjoyed. She wondered, vaguely at first, whether it was for this purpose that she had been kept, if the lot designed for her was that of drudge and *souffre douleur*. When this thought first came to her, she shrank from it with horror, trying to think it a wicked imagination of her own brain, sought in herself, and her own conduct, faults which deserved repression, and accounted for the customary chilling reserve by the oppression of sorrow;

for the harsh speeches, by which alone that reserve was broken, by the bitterness of grief.

She tried in vain to draw this veil over her own eyes, to deceive her own mind, but it would not do, and she soon knew that in looking forward to her life as a penance, her imagination had fallen far short of the truth—that far more than what she had resolved to endure Mrs. Berkley was fully resolved to inflict. Pride came to her aid. "I can bear it," she thought; and she nerved herself to such silent endurance.

By and by, however, she began to wonder if this were not unnecessary self-immolation. She thought of her father, of his tenderness, of his loving words and caresses, remembered how gentle and conciliating her stepmother had always been to her in his presence, and wondered if he could have foreseen the present condition of things, have seen her thus starving for a kind look or word; never glanced at but with aversion, spoken to but with blame, humiliated before the very servants—would he have still wished her to be here, would he have left that command. She felt sure of the contrary, but yet he *had* left it, and now if she were to resist, to try to escape, what would he think? And then the poor child longed to know the unknowable, and wished, even more bitterly than most of us have done,

"Oh that it were given us for one short hour to see
The souls we love, that they might tell us
What and where they be."

She prayed earnestly for guidance and for strength, and at last determined to remain as best she might until her grand-parents came to town, and that then, if any opportunity for release offered, she would seize it, confessing humbly that there had been some arrogance in the eagerness with which she had caught at the occasion for self sacrifice—always, although Janet did not know it, a temptation to enthusiastic youth.

One afternoon she had received the usual contemptuous dismissal from the drawing room on the announcement of a visitor, and taking a book had carried it with her to her favorite seat.

The Berkley house was an old-fashioned square one, standing *entré cour et jardin*. A flagged hall ran through it from front to back, and a broad staircase led from this hall to the upper story, having half-way up a wide landing lighted by a high-arched window, with a deeply recessed and cushioned seat. Here Janet loved to sit, and look into the tall iron-wood tree, which waved its graceful boughs and delicate twigs and foliage within a few feet of the glass. She knew all the busy tribe of birds that inhabited it, and had even a kindness for a little green lizard that lived in one particular hole. She always gave it a few crumbs and put them carefully into its own corner, out of the way of her voracious feathered pensioners.

On this particular evening, however, she was too heavy-hearted to think of birds or

trees, lizard or even book. Some fresh indignity from Mrs. Berkley, some new repulse from Agnes had made her more unhappy than ever, and she was sitting gazing with unseeing eyes into the green world without, when the drawing room door above opened, and Mr. Maxwell came out. His steps made no sound on the softly carpeted stair, and Janet, lost in thought, sat perfectly still.

The setting sun shone through the crimson curtains that covered the upper panes, and tinged the girl's cheek with light, turning her hair to gold, and her black dress to a royal purple. The colors were almost as brilliant as if cast by stained glass, and Maxwell, who was a connoisseur in beauty, stood still to look. Not that Janet was a beauty yet, but a real connoisseur can judge of the picture before the finishing touch is put, of the wine before the delicate bouquet is fully developed.

The past months had greatly changed Janet; sorrow sweetens and deepens noble natures, and a softer, more womanly grace had come to her, and as she sat there with her slender hands clasped, her gray eyes fixed on the glowing sky without, and her fair hair irradiated, an artist might have painted her as a youthful saint or martyr.

"She looked a splendid angel, newly dressed, save wings, for Heaven,"

Maxwell ejaculated as he saw her, and noted the pure outlines in the glowing colors, and then Keats' "Eve of St. Agnes" came into his mind, and he wondered if this were indeed the pale girl at whom he had hardly ever looked. It would not do to stand staring, however, so after a long gaze he descended the stairs, and Janet starting slightly, and taking up her book, made a little bow and fixed her eyes upon it. He paused, and pointing to the sky and the lovely garden without, said:

"You can hardly find a printed page so fair as that, Miss Berkley. Even the most diligent student must be distracted by such an outlook."

Janet was surprised; he had never taken any notice of her before, but she answered, hardly lifting her eyes, that "she often sat there, and the sunsets were generally fine."

"Not so fine as this, surely," he persisted. "Even in an Italian sky those clouds would be rare."

Janet "had never been in Italy."

"That is a pleasure to come. I was there only for a few months, but I look back to them with delight."

Janet "supposed so."

"You should persuade your mother to take you and your sister there."

Janet's lip quivered, but she only said that she "had no desire to leave home."

"Are you so very happy here?" he said suddenly, dropping his voice and bending his head to hers.

She flushed with anger. "Insolent," she thought, but remained silent.

He tried another topic. "You were reading

poetry I see. May I ask what author? Ah, Coleridge! No wonder that you were absorbed. Was it the 'Ancient Mariner' who held you with his glittering eye?"

"I was reading 'Christabelle,'" she said.

"Most beautiful, especially this, and this," turning the leaves rapidly, and reading passage after passage.

Janet, who had never heard such admirable reading in her life before, could not help showing her delight; but she froze again at the *personal* tone in his voice, as closing the volume he said:

"Do you know Keats's poems—John Keats? No? You reminded me of the most beautiful of them just now. I will bring you the book."

The temptation was great, for one of Janet's troubles was a want of books. Her father had rarely read—Mrs. Berkley never, and except the heavy leather-bound volumes of her grandfather's day, there were none in the house. But she resisted, and answered coldly: "Thank you—I would rather not."

"You do not know. I shall certainly bring them."

She shrank instinctively and replied again: "I do not wish it, and Mrs. Berkley would not like it either."

"She will not object," he answered carelessly, and before she could reply he was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

"Then the little girl smiled so sweetly into the face of the second ruffian that his heart smote him, and he said, 'I will help the child out of this wood.'"
[*Babes in the Wood.*]

That Mrs. Berkley had seen, if not heard this interview Janet was sure. She had observed the drawing room door open slightly, and remain perfectly steady, although a strong draught was blowing down the passage; but as she (Mrs. Berkley) never mentioned it Janet was also silent. Two days later, however, as Janet was about to enter the dining room she heard voices within and was turning away, when Mrs. Berkley called to her in the gentle tone which showed the presence of guests: "Come in, my dear, Mr. Maxwell wishes to speak to you." Janet had to comply, and Mrs. Berkley continued:

"Mr. Maxwell, my dear, has brought you a book which he says you wish to see."

"I think I declined the book," said she gravely.

"I believe that you did," said Maxwell, with evident amusement. "Yet I have persisted as you see." And he offered a green and gold volume.

Janet looked to Mrs. Berkley who hastened to reply:

"Of course, my dear, I can have no objection. Any book that Mr. Maxwell recommends."

"Thank you," said Janet stiffly, and with-

out looking up; and laying the book on the table seated herself at some distance from the others. They were soon interrupted by a servant who announced—

"The lady what colleck fo' de' Docas Society mum, an' she beg to speak to you yo'self."

"I must go," said Mrs. Berkley rising reluctantly. "Wait for me—I will not be long."

Maxwell instantly approached Janet.

"Miss Berkley," said he pleadingly, you do not know how wrong you are to scorn Keats and me. Let me only read you a few lines."

He looked very handsome and the poems were tempting, but Janet answered coldly, "Not to-day, thank you—I—prefer reading to myself. I must go up stairs now."

Maxwell saw that she was deaf to persuasion, and changed his tactics, saying as he opened the door for her:

"I heard from Mr. Selwyn this morning, Miss Berkley, and shall write to him to-morrow. Shall I give any message from you?"

Janet's face, voice, nay her whole person seemed to take life and animation as she exclaimed: "You hear from grandpapa? I did not know that."

"Very often" (stretching the fact, for he heard very seldom.) He is good enough to employ me to arrange some points between the estates, which necessitates frequent correspondence and visits here."

Janet, who knew nothing at all of business, wondered if all the lawyer's visits were about "the estates," and felt rather more kindly towards him. He continued:

"In this letter he speaks doubtfully of his movements, and seems undecided whether to come here next month, or go to Virginia."

"Oh! I hope," cried Janet in an anguished tone, "that they will come here. What shall I do if they do not?"

"I will say so," said Maxwell, "and indeed I hope it on my own account. Mr. Selwyn's presence will facilitate my work wonderfully."

"Pray say so then—and say that I want them, oh! so much."

"Give me any message you like, I will deliver it verbatim. But do you not write yourself?"

"Of course, but my letters get lost in the strangest way," (the lawyer's eyes twinkled,) "and grandmamma does not understand it, and writes very seldom. Only say that I send my love and beg them to come."

"As Blue Beard's wife sent for her brothers," he said with a quick look. She colored violently, but made no answer, and he continued: "Of course they will come at your call. Is your mother engaged still, Miss Agnes?" as over Janet's head he saw Agnes walking noiselessly down the passage.

"She begs you to go to the drawing room," Agnes answered. He went, and the two girls were left alone. Janet, feeling some compunction for the scant courtesy with

which she had behaved about the poems, went back to the table to take the book, when, contrary to all custom, Agnes spoke to her.

"Was Mr. Maxwell talking to you *again*?" she asked, "and what did he say?"

"He brought me this book," answered Janet, showing it, "and said the poems were very beautiful;" then, with curious impulse, she added: "Do you know Mr. Maxwell, Agnes? and do you like him?"

It seemed a very simple question and Janet was surprised at the effect produced, for Agnes turned full towards her, raised her heavy lids and said, with a force and concentration of power extraordinary in one so young: "I do know him, and I hate him." Her really splendid eyes burnt with a fierce light, and Janet started amazed, but the large white lids fell back almost instantly, and it was with a little more than her usual coolness that she added: "and I advise you to do so, too;" and immediately left the room.

A week passed and Janet heard nothing of Mr. Maxwell, nor did she receive any letter from Ashurst. This depressed her extremely, and a few tears were dropping over the violets, that she was setting out in the garden one afternoon, when, hearing a step, she hastily brushed them away, as Mr. Maxwell's voice asked, "Gardening, Miss Berkley?"

She jumped up hastily, and he went on answering the surprise in her face.

"I have seen Mrs. Berkley, and she has given me leave to join you here. I want to speak to you on business."

"On business! to me?"

"Yes, and I beg that you will pardon me if I say anything to wound you."

She bowed gravely, and leaning against a grape vine prepared to listen.

"I have received a letter from your grandfather, in answer to one which I wrote the day after I last saw you. In that I mentioned your strong desire to see him, and also said—pardon me—that you did not appear to me to be looking well."

"I am quite well," returned Janet, "only weary. But about his coming?"

"Yes, about his coming. My dear young lady, forgive me, but let me ask if there has been any misunderstanding—any difference, in fact—between your grand-parents and yourself?"

"What do you mean? A quarrel?" asked the direct Janet. "No, how could there be?"

"How, indeed? But I ask because Mr. Selwyn expresses some annoyance—seems in fact affronted at your wish to reside with your stepmother, and says that he sees no reason for Mrs. Selwyn and himself coming to town."

"No good reason," said Janet, piteously. "Oh, how little he knows! Mr. Maxwell, I see that you do know all about it, so there can be no harm in my speaking. I was left to my stepmother by papa, and I told grandpapa so, told him that it had been papa's last wish and desire—I can't imagine why—that I

should live with her, and that I would do it, would submit myself because it was *his* wish. Grandpapa was angry, because he thought I did not value his opinion and chose to act for myself; but indeed it was not so. Grandmamma was a little hurt at first, I'm afraid, but she soon understood, and as for their being 'affronted,' as you call it, with me—it is not possible."

"Was this the sole reason for your choice?"

"I had no choice. It was his command. What could I do but submit? And *she* seemed so kind and gentle then that I thought she meant to love me for his sake, and I was glad to do anything to obey him, and I meant to love her, and indeed I tried—but—" and she broke off in confusion.

"But—failed?" questioned the lawyer gently. "Unhappily, love comes not by trying. Mrs. Berkley has perhaps had the same experience."

"Perhaps so," said Janet slowly, "though I do not think that she tried; but, perhaps, I do her wrong. At all events, we are not happy, and I wonder, oh, I do wonder, if papa wishes it still!" And she clasped her hands and gazed upwards, as if straining to see the invisible.

Mr. Maxwell's mouth twitched, but, with all possible gravity, he answered:

"Do I distinctly understand, then, Miss Berkley, that it was as an act of submission to your father's will, and from no other motive, that you preferred living here?"

"Why, what other motive could I have?"

"The city—society—young companionship."

"Against Ashurst and *them*! Oh, Mr. Maxwell, you don't know grandmamma, or you would see how impossible that is! No, it is just that I am, before all things, papa's child, and must do as he wills."

"It is only very lately," said Maxwell, looking down and speaking with a sort of careful gravity, "that I became aware of the great importance which you and Mrs. Berkley attach to that expression in your father's will, and I think it my duty to tell you my opinion upon it. It appears to me that you over-estimate its import and weight."

"How?" very eagerly.

"I do not know if you are quite aware of the circumstances under which the will was made?"

She turned so very pale that he feared she was going to faint, and insisted on placing her upon a bench and waiting a few minutes before he went on.

"I, as you know, was sent for to draw it. Mr. Berkley was then in full possession of his senses, although very weak, and could speak, but seemed disinclined to do so. Mrs. Berkley had a paper, which she informed me she had written during the previous night from his instructions. She read the paper aloud to me, and at the end asked Mr. Berkley if it was all that he wished. He answered, very feebly, 'It is!' I then took the paper and read it again. My impression was, and is, that the provisions were what they are, from

the idea that an undivided was always better than a divided interest, and that therefore Mrs. Berkley was to have entire charge and control of the property."

"Property—but me?"

"I am coming to that. There was no especial mention of you at all, only 'my daughters,' and there was no mention of a place of residence—through forgetfulness, of course. I observed the omission, and being aware that your sister and yourself were not Mrs. Berkley's children, asked if the young ladies were to reside with her. She answered, 'certainly, of course,' and going up to the bed repeated the question. I remember her words distinctly: 'The girls are, of course, to live with me, my dear.' Your father only said 'yes' very low, and turned his face as if fatigued. I grieve to give you such pain," he interrupted himself to add, seeing that quiet tears were running down Janet's face. She signed to him to go on, and he continued:

"When I put the instructions into legal phrase, this clause was of course inserted, and became of equal force with the rest. But—and this is the point to which I want you to attend—had I been aware that Miss Agnes and yourself were half sisters, and of the somewhat complicated relations of your family, also of the claims of Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn, I should have required much clearer and more positive orders before inserting that clause. Being a stranger here I asked no questions, and did as I was told. I think you will see now, however, why I have thought it right to disturb you so," looking gently at her tear-stained cheeks.

Janet looked up and tried to smile through her tears.

"It does not pain or disturb me," she said. "I cannot help grieving to think that I was not there—was away amusing myself. But if this indeed be true—I mean, of course, if I can really think the order given as you say with no more desire of *his* than that, then it will not be good—not binding?"

"Legally, perfectly good and binding, but morally, no. What I wish to explain is, that I believe that in Mr. Berkley's state at that moment he would have assented to almost any proposition made in that way. It was only an assent, and I had observed how much weaker and heavier he grew during the half hour that I was in the room. I do not think it binding on your conscience, especially as the present plan seems to have failed, and Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn ought to be considered."

"You cannot think how happy you make me," cried Janet. "You must tell it all to grandmamma, Mr. Maxwell. If she says my conscience is clear, I shall be satisfied. I was headstrong once, but I will be guided now. But—" and her face fell, "if it is legally binding Mrs. Berkley will never let me go."

"I think she will," said Maxwell quietly. "Mrs. Berkley has possibly been under the same delusion that you have. She too is probably aware of the ill success of the at-

tempt. I will take it upon myself to make her see the matter in its proper light."

"Why did you never tell us this before?" said Janet abruptly, with sudden misgiving. He colored slightly, but answered with perfect composure:

"I was never consulted. Having drawn the will other lawyers were employed to break it; which they could not do—my business was to sustain it, as I did. It was only lately that I became aware that *your* happiness was being sacrificed. In that interest I put away the lawyer and became the man."

"And the friend," cried Janet impulsively, holding out her hand to him. "If you get me free, Mr. Maxwell, you do not know how grateful I shall be to you. Indeed, I do not deserve that you should be so kind, for I never liked you at all, and I know that I was rude and cross about that book, but you must forgive me."

"You were forgiven beforehand," he said, looking down at the slender fingers that lay in his grasp, "but, if I get you free, you must give me my reward, and let me read 'The Eve of St. Agnes' to you."

Mr. Selwyn would have been surprised to find his letter so gravely treated. His expression had been, "I shall be in town next month, although I don't see much advantage in it if my granddaughter still persists in remaining with her stepmother." Mr. Maxwell's reply brought the Selwyns from the country in haste. What he said to Mrs. Berkley remains unknown, but the result was soon seen.

In a very few days she, with the embraces and affectionate protestations of former times, declared that her "over-sensitiveness had made her shrink from acknowledging how great a charge she felt the guidance of two girls to be. That she (bewildered by grief as she had been at the time) had imagined, until Mr. Maxwell reminded her of the facts, that her dearest husband's wishes and instructions on the question of personal guardianship had been as clear and imperative as on all other points. She had forgotten the manner of the directions until Mr. Maxwell had recalled it to her. She was so happy to be able conscientiously to gratify her dear uncle and aunt and to restore Janet (with a sigh) to the parents of her choice."

Mrs. Selwyn's delight may be imagined.

Mr. Selwyn stopped the suit for the recovery of Janet's mother's fortune. Janet forgave, and tried to forget, and Maxwell, thanked and praised by all, read the "Eve of St. Agnes" and many another poem.

"I advised you, six months ago, to employ Mr. Maxwell's influence," said Mrs. George Berkley.

CHAPTER XII.

"Here, by God's rood, is the one maid for me."

[Tennyson.]

On a drizzly August afternoon a group of young men had collected around the door of

the office, at the White Sulphur Springs of Virginia, to see the stages come in. One or two of those lumbering vehicles had arrived, and had deposited their hot and dusty passengers; the loiterers began to disperse, but one, Henry Rogers, still lingered.

"Come Rogers," said one of his friends, "let us be off, the rain is over, come down to the spring."

"No, I have to hang on a bit. These fellows say that there is another coach behind, and I half expect Carlton."

"What, Hugh Carlton? I thought he was in Europe?"

"He has been there three years; but he came over in the last steamer, wrote to hunt me up, and I expect him to-night."

"Well, by-bye old fellow, good luck to you."

Mr. Rogers had not long to wait, he was soon shaking his and our old friend, Hugh Carlton, warmly by the hand, and then the two men looked each other over from head to heel, and commented with the freedom of long friendship on change and improvement.

"And now," said Hugh, "tell me who are here? Any people that I know?"

"Yes, the Porters, Alnwicks and Fentons, and from New York the Chesters and Davenport."

"All those! Well I shall be glad to see the Chesters particularly."

"There are a good many Western people, some very nice ones, and two lovely sisters from New Orleans, I think the prettiest girls here, but some prefer Miss Berkley from D—."

"Miss Berkley. What Berkley?"

"Mrs. James Berkley and daughter, step-daughter somebody said, that's the party."

"Oh! I know her; that is, I did know her three years ago, before she was grown up; and so she is very pretty."

"Very handsome, quite a beauty some think, but not the style I most admire. If you like I can reintroduce you to-night."

"All right. Have you got me a room? A bath and a toilet are advisable."

"A room? A roc's egg! You are welcome to a third of mine. Don't look so shocked, there are fifteen hundred people here, and men are glad of a bed on, or under, the dinner table."

"But I am awfully sorry to crowd you so, Rogers. Such a bore for you!"

"Not at all; European notions! I'm only glad to have a fellow I like. Come along. The other is Campbell, a nice lad from Charleston; he won't be in your way at all."

When Hugh entered the ball-room that night he found many acquaintances, by all of whom the handsome young traveller was cordially greeted; but he looked in vain for the fair tresses and gray eyes of Janet, when Mr. Rogers touched his arm, saying:

"There, Carlton; there are Miss Berkley and her mother. Come and speak to them;" and, before he could say a word, he found himself bowing to two utterly unknown ladies, and heard Mr. Rogers say:

"Miss Berkley, my friend, Mr. Carlton, says

that he has had the pleasure of meeting you formerly. Mrs. Berkley, Mr. Carlton."

At the first glance Hugh saw that there was a mistake. No possible change of time could have transformed Janet's fair tints and mobile features into the regular outlines and splendid coloring of the young lady before him, who, bowing slightly, raised her large black eyes to his, but said never a word. He exclaimed, hurriedly:

"I must apologize! I told my friend that I had known Miss Berkley, but I now see that there must be two of the same name."

The beauty still smiled silently, but her mother hastened to interpose.

"We are very happy to know you now, Mr. Carlton; pray don't apologize; such a very natural mistake! Probably some other member of our family?"

"Miss Janet Berkley, grand-daughter of Mr. Selwyn, was the young lady with whom I had the honor to be acquainted."

"My step-daughter! Agnes, did you ever hear Janet mention Mr. Carlton?"

"No, mamma."

"Poor little Janet, she is so reserved! Dear girl, she is not here now; and you, Mr. Carlton, did I not hear Mr. Rogers say that you had just returned from Europe?" &c., &c.

Hugh, as in duty bound, asked Miss Berkley for the next dance. She waltzed well if a little heavily, and though she said but little, she looked so handsome, and shot such glances from her magnificent eyes, that Hugh was quite content, lost all sense of disappointment, and spent the greater part of the evening with or near her.

A week passed, and in the easy *sans façon* life of the springs, a week does more for the growth of intimacy than a year of ordinary city intercourse. Mrs. and Miss Berkley laid themselves out to captivate Hugh Carlton, and succeeded—in a measure. Despite his travels and his knowledge of the world, he was very frank and unsuspicious, and took for natural kindliness that which was in truth well calculated art.

Agnes Berkley's beauty was in truth enough to have intoxicated a wiser man. Her figure, although rather too full for her height, was beautifully developed, and her eyes, large, soft and languishing, spoke volumes to the imagination, spoke so eloquently, indeed, that it never occurred to Hugh that from her lips he had never heard a syllable beyond the most ordinary commonplace expressions. Sometimes he tried to ask her of Janet, but she made him understand that her sister lived so entirely with the Selwyns that she knew but little of her; and Mrs. Berkley had a way of mentioning the young girl in a deprecating, pitying fashion, as if asking indulgence for some inferiority. This puzzled Hugh, who could not account for it, but insensibly it lowered Janet in his estimation. One day he met Mrs. Berkley going towards the post-office, with some letters in her hand. He offered to post them for her, but she declined, saying that she was going that way to Mrs.

A's cottage, and would not trouble him, and rather nervously put the package into her pocket. One note fell to the ground. Both lady and gentleman stooped to pick it up, and as they did so Hugh saw the address, "Miss Janet Berkley, care of the Hon. Alfred Selwyn, Sweet Springs, Va."

The question that sprang to his lips was suppressed as he saw that she supposed the address unseen, but in the evening he took occasion to speak to Agnes of Janet, as if he supposed her still in D—, and Agnes did not correct him. Wondering much at this, he presently left her and joined a group of men, some of whom were just arrived. One dandified youth, with an eyeglass screwed into his eye, was scanning the assembled belles, and as Hugh approached he saw his look fixed upon Agnes and heard him say:

"Handsome, oh yes, very handsome, not like her sister though; only half sister? that's it, I suppose. The other ain't such a stunner as this girl, but, by George, she has a way with her."

"Who do you mean, Williams?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"T'other Miss Berkley. She hangs out at the Sweet, you know. Didn't they tell you? Greatest belle been there for years, and sweet with all; not stuck up, not fast. Ought to be labelled 'real dangerous;' just the sort of girl you have to knock under to. I ran away to save my life, for the fellows over there are dying like flies for her."

"Ask him," whispered Hugh to Mr. Rogers, "who Miss Berkley is with at the Sweet?"

"With the old folks; grandfather, plucky old cock, style of Gen. Washington, you know. Had the gout and went to the Hot; most starved, and came on to the Sweet for grub. And then, there's the old lady! So shocked at us poor devils! You should just see her face at a polka!"

Hugh withdrew quietly, went to the office and took a seat in the morning stage for the Sweet Springs, then returning to the ball-room he said with a languid air to Mrs. Berkley, that really all this talking and dancing was almost too much for him, and that he meant to go over to the Sweet for a little rest and cold bathing. For one instant Mrs. Berkley's face clouded; then she answered sweetly.

"Oh, indeed! We shall be there ourselves before very long to join our party. The Selwyns and Janet have just arrived there, and of course, I could not have the old people long at such a place, with only Janet! We shall not be here much more than a week longer."

Agnes only said "going!" and "good-bye," but she said it with such an accent, and such a look that Hugh's heart beat quickly as he pressed her hand, and if he had not had a slight sense of fraud about her answer that afternoon, he would have been touched indeed.

"I believe I am a great fool," Hugh said to himself the next day, as he was jolting across

the long mountain that lies between the White and the Sweet Springs; his only companions being a sickly mamma with a huge negro maumer and two children, who sucked barley candy and cried incessantly. He thought of the cool green lawn, and the soft dark eyes that he had left, and repeated with fervor:

"I believe I am a great fool! What have I come off for? To see a girl. And why should I remember that girl of all the girls that I have seen? I can't help it. Across the faces of English and French and German and Italian women, some of them so beautiful, that little pale faced child has come back to me, and I have seen the look of anguish which I gave her when I took hope away from her. I wonder what she is now. I am not the least in love with her, but—I have a great curiosity about her."

Under the impression of this curiosity, Hugh, having refreshed himself by a plunge into the magnificent bath, entered the drawing-room quietly, and looked around for acquaintances. Seeing, however, no one whom he knew, he took refuge in a window and observed the company. Soon he saw the object of his journey. She was sitting leaning back in a large chair, a gentleman stood behind her and two others in front, with cards in their hands, were talking and apparently disputing eagerly. Hugh moved slowly up the room until he got near enough to catch some words of the conversation. They were eagerly contending for a dance, which each youth declared belonged to him, and of which the lady nonchalantly averred she had no distinct recollection.

She sat listening, and now and then putting in a word, with a gentle, gracious indifference, evidently more amused than flattered, by the somewhat ostentatiously offered homage.

"The Princess is in the ascendant to-night," thought Hugh, "but how she is altered, and how improved!"

Janet had indeed altered since he had seen her last. The tall shapeless figure was now round and exquisitely proportioned, the pale cheeks had a delicate rose tint; the features had lost the sharp thinness of girlhood, and taken the sweet soft outlines of eighteen.

Very pretty and distinguished, rather than regularly beautiful, she looked as she sat there, although the pure limpid gray eyes, with their dark lashes, and the exquisite mouth, might have claimed higher praise.

While Hugh was still looking at her, the gentleman who had stood all this time silently behind Miss Berkley's chair advanced as the music struck up, and offering his arm, led her with an air of proud possession to join the set just forming. He was a very handsome man, not young, but in the prime of life, with a good strong figure, regular features, and the blackest of hair and eyes. Hugh wondered vaguely if he could ever have seen him before, but as they passed the spot where he stood Janet's eyes met his. She stopped, turned perfectly white, and her breath came with a gasp that was almost a sob

Hugh bowed profoundly, but she offered her hand, and he knew by its tremulous touch that she remembered as well as he did when their hands had last met, even before the words that broke involuntarily from her lips.

"Oh, how right you were! how well you knew!"

"Unhappily," he answered, gravely, "but do not let me detain you now, or sadden your evening. I shall see you later."

"Not to-night," she exclaimed. "To-morrow you must come to us. Mr. Maxwell," she added, turning to her partner, who was looking with surprised displeasure at her agitation, "you must excuse me, I cannot dance again to-night, you must let me go now." And she hastily left the room before either of the men could follow her.

"As a friend of Miss Berkley and of her family, sir," said Maxwell, turning angrily to Hugh, "perhaps you will allow me to ask the meaning of this scene?"

Hugh felt an intense desire to knock him down, but, with an effort, he answered: "I do not know what right you may have to ask, sir, but I have no objection to replying. I happened to be with Miss Berkley at the time of her father's death, and she associates me with that painful occasion."

"The time of her father's death," repeated Mr. Maxwell. "Why I was there myself. Who are you, sir?"

The tone was even more insolent than the words, and Hugh firing, answered:

"My name, sir, is Hugh Carlton," and in the well known formula added, "and I am at your service when and where you please."

He turned on his heel as he spoke and was walking away, when he felt a touch on his arm, and saw Maxwell, pale as death, holding out a tremulous hand. In an equally tremulous voice he said:

"Mr. Carlton I beg your pardon! I did not know you. I meant no offence, I hope that you will excuse—will understand."

"The deuce take me if I understand a word," thought Hugh. "Can the fellow be a coward and afraid of a shot; it looks strangely like it; he is shaking all over, poor devil." However he gave his hand, although reluctantly, and the two parted, Hugh saying to himself as he walked of:

"I wonder, now, why I hate that man so? Poor wretch, he was awfully scared; how cold and clammy his hand felt, and his big black eyes shrunk up in his head, like the witch woman's in Christabelle—like a snake's! I swear he looked like that moccasin of ours!"

It was with some trepidation that Hugh the next morning, seeing Janet and Mrs. Selwyn taking a slow walk under the trees, approached them, but Janet came to meet him smiling with frank cordiality.

"I was very much ashamed of myself last night," she said; "you must forgive me, Mr. Carlton; I had no notion that you were in this country, and your sudden appearance brought back everything; but to-day is too bright and

sweet for sad thoughts, and grandmamma will be glad to see you."

"Very glad indeed, Mr. Carlton," said Mrs. Selwyn, joining them. "This silly child tells me that she gave you a poor welcome last evening. Let us sit down here on this bench, and tells us of your travels. The Vincents said that you had wandered far and wide."

They seated themselves under the trees, and for the next hour Hugh had the pleasant sense of being the sole object of interest to two ladies, the elder of whom by her kindly dignity and sweetness, the younger by her vivid and intelligent interest, drew him on to dwell far more on his *personal* share of what he had seen and done than he would have believed it possible for him to do a day before. Whether he spoke of English lakes or Russian steppes, of Parisian salons or Italian stores, Janet's eyes brightened or melted as the theme demanded; her questions always elicited the best point, her remarks illustrated his own, and unconsciously, but none the less pleasantly, he proved the proverb, "*à l'auditeur l'orateur*."

All too quickly passed the time, and to Hugh, at least, the interruption of Mr. Maxwell's approach was most unwelcome; but he came with a smiling face, and, after courteous greetings to the ladies, said to Hugh:

"I really hope, Mr. Carlton, that you have forgiven my brusquerie of last night. I had a wretched headache, and quite 'mistook the situation.'"

Hugh of course answered pleasantly, and the whole party adjourned to the house, Mrs. Selwyn inviting Hugh to visit her husband, whose gout had not gone so entirely as to enable him to do more than hobble about on one floor.

Hugh noticed that on their short walk to the hotel Maxwell placed himself at Janet's side with a certain air of right, and spoke to her with a mingling of deference and gentle banter which might have been thought graceful by some, but which he thought detestable.

Some pleasant days passed. The Selwyns had their carriage with them and invited their friends to drive. Mr. Selwyn, not being strong enough to hold the reins himself, sometimes asked Hugh to take the coachman's place; and, although on one occasion he was provoked, by Janet's relinquishing the box seat by his side to a girl of sixteen who longed for it, and again, at her staying at home with a sick child, and sending its weary mother out in her stead, the drives which they did take were charming, and the walks even more so. At the end of a week Hugh confessed that *curiosity* was no longer his guiding feeling.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Conter Fleurettes."

[*French Refrain.*]

All, however, was not smooth before Hugh. Mr. Maxwell was the thorn in his flesh, the

gall drop in his cup. Hugh hated and admired, feared and despised the man at the same time. The hatred, he told himself, was instinctive; had there been no Janet, no jealousy in the case, he would still have detested him. Why, it was not hard to say, for Maxwell, a remarkably handsome man of forty-two, had read much and seen more, and had over his young rival the advantage that comes from years, when years have ripened but not saddened the mind, have widened the intellect without shadowing the spirits. His conversation, Hugh knew only too well, was admirable. Without the least shade of pedantry he drew from books illustrations and quotations which gave a broad and general interest to discussions on men and things; without the affectation of being a man of the world, he drew from his knowledge of the world a practical wisdom which lent point and value to his knowledge of books. His manner, too, was excellent; cordial and frank to men, courteous and easy to women, and Hugh hated him the more, because he never lost the feeling that under this agreeable exterior he was always saying to him, as the detestable Littimer did to David Copperfield, "You are so very young, sir."

Hugh thought, too, that he had a better cause for dislike than this irritable jealousy. He was sure that now and then a base thought, a mean motive, a low suspicion, would show for an instant amid this clever talk, although any such expression was recalled and retracted with consummate skill, and was never tangible enough to be seized or repeated. Once, and once only, had this happened, when Janet was present, and then Hugh had seen a puzzled look in her eyes, an expression of distress on her mouth, although but for a moment, for it vanished as Maxwell dexterously imputed the sentiment to "worldly wisdom," as to an impure source. The young man felt sure, too, that the other hated him, for although Maxwell was studiously polite to him, he sometimes caught his eyes fixed on him with a look of malevolence which chilled his very blood. But if he sent a defiant glance in return, Maxwell would turn pale, and his eyes grow dim and contract with a curious scared look which turned rage to contempt, and made Hugh call him in the plainest vernacular "a damned coward." Janet evidently liked and admired him exceedingly, and treated him with a pretty mixture of deference and familiarity which drove Hugh almost wild. Mr. Selwyn swore by him, prophesied his future eminence, and quoted him on all occasions. Mrs. Selwyn alone mingled some reserve with her approbation, assented without warmth to her husband's praises, and once, when Mr. Selwyn was expatiating on his varied talents, remarked, with unusual sarcasm, that she thought the chief of them was being "all things to all men."

Politics were at this time very interesting. Kansas, it was known, would soon apply for admission to the Union, and would, it was

only too certain, be a cause of dispute. Mr. Selwyn, who had for years been a member of the Senate of his own State, took a keen interest in the question. There were many other gentlemen at the Springs equally concerned, and Maxwell, who intended to "run" for Congress at the approaching election, was always engaged in their long and frequent debates, a preoccupation which gave Hugh many blessed opportunities.

On one of these days Maxwell's attention was much distracted by seeing Hugh crossing the lawn with Mrs. Selwyn and Janet to their favorite seat. The spot was out of sight of the house, and, not until the eager politicians had talked themselves weary, could Maxwell escape from them and follow the ladies. What he then saw called a frown to his brow, although it would have sent an artist to his sketch-book, for the group was charming.

Mrs. Selwyn, her dark dress just relieved by her snowy cap and fleecy Shetland shawl, sat tranquilly knitting under the drooping boughs of a large horse-chestnut tree. Near her Janet sat on a low bench, with her white robes flowing softly round her on the emerald lawn. She held a book from which she was reading aloud, and Hugh bending over her followed with his eyes her guiding pencil, now and then putting in a word. The shade of the branches was so complete that the spot looked a cool green oasis in the midst of the blinding glare without, only an occasional fleck of sunshine penetrating the thick leaves, and touching the little silver curl that would escape from the old lady's cap frill, and falling kindly on the blonde heads at her feet.

It was clearly a lesson of some sort, and Maxwell ground his teeth and cursed the inventor of books.

A less skilful man would have broken in upon the idyll, but Maxwell never made himself unwelcome, so he quietly returned to the house and observed carelessly to Mr. Selwyn that the ladies had found a cool place on the lawn. The old gentleman at once went to join them, and Maxwell presently strolling thither was in time to hear his question of "what were they reading," and to hear Janet's reply:

"Mr. Carlton is giving me a French lesson, grandpapa. He says my pronunciation is not very bad, and he has got such a charming book, 'Les Confidences,' by Lamartine. Have you read it, Mr. Maxwell?"

"Yes, some time ago."

"I read the first part last night," she continued; "and now we are reading Graziella, which is even more delightful. But I read very slowly, and Mr. Carlton will not tell me the end."

"Of course not," said Hugh, smiling; "it would spoil your pleasure. Give me my book, and we will finish it to-morrow. I cannot let you go on alone."

"Why, there is no particular end," said Maxwell, provoked at his easy tone. "Only the end that must come to such a romance,

'He loves and rides away.' It is just the old song."

"And rides away!" repeated Janet, with horrified accent. "Oh, you surely do not mean that he left her so—I have always admired Lamartine so much!"

"And his beautiful head, and white waistcoat, and *la jeune France* generally?" said Maxwell, teasingly. "But you did not really suppose that he had made the bare-footed fisher-girl Madame de Lamartine, and as it pretends to be an autobiography—"

"Pretends!" cried Janet; "it is no pretence. Do you imagine that any one could invent all those beautiful tender things about his mother? No indeed! and for Graziella—Do, Mr. Carlton, tell me that what Mr. Maxwell says is not true."

"Loves and *rows* away, to be accurate. I'm afraid, Miss Berkley, that horrid as it be, it is true."

"Why what did you expect," said Maxwell, in answer to her confounded look.

"I thought," she said earnestly, "that she had died—that she had known herself to be no fit wife for him, and that so, of her love, she had died, and that after a long time he had given himself to France and fame, but not—"

"Not to half a dozen other loves and a rich wife at the end; so runs the world, Miss Berkley. After all he was but a boy, and you know the song:

"A young man's love is but light straw on fire."

"You quote wrongly," exclaimed Hugh; "It is a young man's *hate*, and after all it is but Davie Gellatly, the fool, who sings it."

"Possibly," said Maxwell, with a slight shrug at his impetuosity, "but really, for your peace of mind, it is but a novel. Such delicacy and elevation of feeling are quite misplaced in an Italian island girl of that low rank. They are among the lower intelligences."

"I do not think so," said Hugh; "of course the picture has been touched, the colors softened and brightened, but in the main I hold it a true story, and Graziella has many likenesses in those islands where the people are still true children of Nature, and of such a lovely nature!"

"Children of Nature are generally savages," said Maxwell, drily, "and I have never believed in the noble savage since I saw the real Uncas and Chingachook in the far West."

"You cannot compare the Italian peasantry with our Indians," said Hugh, warmly. "They are the descendants of a noble race; even the most ignorant have a certain grace and refinement about them. They live among the ruins of a great civilization which insensibly inspires elevating thoughts; and superstitious though they be, they are religious. The worship of the *Madonna* and the *Bambino* gives gentleness at least, even if they never rise to the highest comprehension."

"*Donnas* are easily worshipped in those islands perhaps," said Maxwell, with a covert sneer, which sent the blood to Hugh's cheek,

"but it requires a very lively imagination to believe in the high thoughts of a fisherman of Procida, or the gentleness of a Neapolitan bandit."

Mrs. Selwyn saw the flushed cheeks, and interposed:

"Are they not terribly revengeful, Mr. Carlton? Those terrible stories of the *Vendetta*! that is not Christianity!"

"The *Vendetta* is Corsican," said Hugh, "and the Corsicans are a different and a sterner race than the more Southern islanders; and for Christianity, Mrs. Selwyn, do none of us ever feel revenge?"

"Why of course we do," said Mr. Selwyn. "Come, come, wife! We don't go about with stilettos and stab our enemies in the dark; but if a man injures me, I hate him and don't conceal it, and if I can give him an honest blow, I will; eh, Mr. Carlton?"

And if," said Hugh, whose face had taken a strange stern look "we forego our vengeance it is not always religion, but—other considerations that restrain us."

"The strong arm of the law, I suppose Maxwell would say," said the old gentleman turning to his friend. "Why my dear fellow! what is the matter? Are you ill?" for Maxwell, pale as death was holding by the back of Mrs. Selwyn's chair and looked ready to fall. Hugh sprang up to help him, but he shrank from his touch, and recovering himself, said that it was only the coming on of a headache, and went to the house.

"We had better all go in too," said Mrs. Selwyn, rising and taking her husband's arm, "for I think the sun must be affecting all your heads, when you and Mr. Carlton proclaim yourselves absolute heathens."

"Who is Mr. Maxwell?" said Hugh one day to Janet. "I know that he now lives in D—, but he seems to have been everywhere, and his ways are not quite the ways of your people."

"Ah! you see that! Yet he is a D— man by birth, and his father was a dear friend of grandpapa's—a very dear friend, indeed, but he (the father, I mean,) married a lady from the West and he soon died. Then the widow went back to her own home, and in a shockingly short time, they say, married again, and so completely forgot her first husband, as even to call her child by the second's name. She never spoke to him of his father, and it was not until he grew up that he learnt his own story, and became very anxious to come back. He could not leave his mother then though, for the step-father was not kind to her, but after her death, one of our chief lawyers, Mr. Crofts, who was travelling for his health, met him, and having known the first Mr. Maxwell, and seeing how clever the son was, he invited him to come to D—, and soon made him his partner."

"Oh! then, that is the reason that Mr. Selwyn thinks so much of him."

"One reason: but everybody thinks much of him. And then he behaved so very kindly

when, you know, we were in great trouble. Mr. Crofts was ill, dying, and everything went into Mr. Maxwell's hands, and he was so good! He had only been in D—a few months then, and grandpapa had not met him, but he was quite delighted to find his old friend's son such a person; and now he thinks that he will be the very first man in the place, in politics and at the bar; and so do I," ended Janet, with perfect simplicity.

Hugh almost choked with mortification! He pondered long on the difference between admiration and love. If Janet had had any tender feeling could she have spoken thus of Maxwell? "Clever!" hang him! of course he was. "So good!" he did not believe that. Bad men, villains indeed, often seemed good for a time, to serve their own purposes. "The first man in politics and at the bar!" perhaps so. But the first to *her*? Oh, could he be that? Of his loving her Hugh had no doubt, but, did she know it? Had he addressed her? Or was he trying to make himself sure before the enlightening words were spoken? And what had he—Hugh Carlton—best do? Should he speak, try to be loved for love's sake, or should he enter the lists of courtship, and pit himself, his youth, his pure heart and mind, against this clever, witty, brilliant man of the world; this scheming, cowardly, dangerous, hypocritical wretch? No epithets were too bad for Hugh's imagination, and all the time he felt his own chance so small, he knew himself so inferior to the other in all brilliant external qualities, knew so well that Mr. Selwyn would be on the side of his foe. And Mrs. Selwyn, what would she wish? How came it that Hugh never thought of Agnes Berkley and her mother as factors in his problem?

He was so absorbed in these thoughts that he forgot to speak, and Janet, taking up her book, had begun reading again, when he roused himself, and seeing how strange his long silence had been, blundered in his confusion into the worst words possible.

"I beg your pardon, but you set me thinking. I don't like to hear you say all that of Mr. Maxwell. I don't think him a good man. Of course he is clever, but I am sure he is bad. He makes me think of the witch woman in Christabelle; sometimes his eyes shrink from mine and he looks scared and wicked. I am sure that he is not honest and true, and I—I hope you do not like him."

This was too much. All Janet's loyalty resented such accusations, and she rose, saying coldly: "You forget that I told you that Mr. Maxwell is our *friend*. I cannot listen to such things said of him. I don't know what you mean by liking," reddening as she spoke; "of course I like and admire him very much. I am sorry if you do not, Mr. Carlton. Good morning." And she walked off to the house in a towering rage, leaving her young lover thunderstruck.

For two days Hugh was the most miserable being in existence. Was there ever, he asked himself, such an unhappy, stupid, blundering

dunderhead as he? Could he, had he tried, have done anything more calculated to injure his own cause? Flatly to accuse of wickedness and cowardice a man of whom he knew absolutely nothing, save that he was highly esteemed by persons whose judgment he was bound to respect! To put into words suspicions based on chance expressions, on momentary looks and tones; and then to wind up with a hint that she—that lofty young Princess—might like, and everybody knew what like in that tone meant, this man! What could she think but that the meanest jealousy, the most impertinent stupidity, had prompted his words? His despair was complete.

As for Janet, never had she been so angry. Was this the deference due to her grandfather's friend and to her own? What possible ground could Mr. Carlton have for his accusations? and what, what excuse for his last words? Janet's head rose to its proudest height, and her eyes shone large and bright as she recalled them. She like—like *so*—any man! What right had Hugh Carlton to insult her thus. She would never, never speak to him again. In this state of mind she remained all day, took a long tête-à-tête walk in the afternoon with Mr. Maxwell, and danced with him three times in the evening, vouchsafing only the most distant of bows to Hugh when he ventured timidly to approach her.

At night, however, in the solitude of her room she felt a little softened. Hugh's face, with its clear, honest blue eyes, came before her; the tone of his voice, not deep and modulated like Maxwell's, but earnest and impetuous in its candor, smote upon her ears. She let down all her long hair upon her shoulders, and as she stood combing its soft tresses, thought again over all that he had said. Could he have any reason for his charges? Some tones, some expressions, some looks of Maxwell's, which had jarred upon her for a moment, but which he had quickly made her forget, came back to her mind; she felt perplexed and pained. She remembered the conversation of a few days before. She had chanced to look at Maxwell when her grandfather and Hugh had spoken so fiercely of revenge, and had seen just such a look of terrified malevolence come to his face as Hugh described. She had been startled and shocked for an instant; but the ghastly paleness and faintness which had quickly followed it had made her attribute it to physical suffering, and it had passed from her mind; now she recalled it. Then she thought of the crowning offence: "I hope you do not like him!" What could Hugh Carlton mean? And more, what did Mr. Maxwell mean? She had never thought of him as a lover, but now the conviction came to her that he was one. Oh no! she did *not* like him! that was certain. Admire, esteem, respect—until to-night—she had done, but love, oh no, impossible! And Mr. Carlton, why should he lay that accent on it? Did he like

her? Why did he look and speak so earnestly? And why look so miserable that evening? And, most important of all, what did she herself feel about it?

That question Janet did not choose to answer, but she was in a charitable frame of mind as she rolled her long coils round her head, and went to sleep, resolving to "make it up" with Hugh to-morrow.

To-morrow, however, Hugh held aloof, and Mr. Maxwell was devoted, so devoted that Janet saw it and shrank back. Maxwell adroitly retreated and talked with Mr. Selwyn, and Janet, after driving with her grandmother and reading aloud to her, went off with a party of girls and learnt three *lovely* new crochet stitches that evening.

CHAPTER XIV.

Matters stood thus, this day and the next, until late in the afternoon, when as Hugh was smoking a sulky cigar by himself on the lawn a young damsel tripped up to him and said:

"Mr. Carlton, do you like picnics?"

Hugh looked up. The speaker was a merry little body of about fifteen, the daughter of an old friend of Mrs. Selwyn's, a widow, who with her son and two daughters was then at the Springs. Mary Merton, the elder girl, was intimate with Janet, and this little Susy was the pet of the house, saying and doing pretty much what she pleased, by virtue of her high spirits and very small size, which made people generally take her for a child of eleven. In answer to Susy's question Hugh, throwing away his cigar, replied:

"That depends, Miss Susy, on who goes to the picnic."

"A *very* small picnic," she answered; "but you see Tom has come."

"Who is Tom?"

"Why! don't you know? Our cousin, Tom Spalding, and (whispering) he is engaged to sister Mary. Did you really not know?"

"No. How should I?"

"Well, I thought Janet would have told you. Now you see Tom and Mary would like a day out of doors among the hills."

"I suppose so! And will you be devoted to me, if we go with them?"

"Perfectly devoted," she answered, burying her hands in her apron pockets, and twinkling her funny little eyes at him. "And Jack," (Jack was her brother, a lad of sixteen, "will go, too, and he will be devoted to Janet! and so I think we six, and the plums, will have a nice time."

Hugh's heart leapt up, but he answered with perfect gravity:

"Plums will perfect the party. Where are they to be found?"

"Not far off; over that hill," pointing—"and down a road, just a good walk. Jack found the place the other day; it's an abandoned orchard, and there's a little house on the mountain with an old woman and butter-

milk. Jack has been talking of it for a week, and I do so want an outing! I am tired of this fast life myself." And with a *blasé* air the small damsel gazed at Hugh.

"I am tired of it, too," he answered, truthfully enough. "When will the day come, Miss Susy? To-morrow?"

"No, the day after; but keep it a dead secret," whispering, "for if we went to-morrow, or talked about it, I'm perfectly sure that *that* Mr. Maxwell would go too, and be horrid."

"Would all your party think so?" asked Hugh, grimly.

"No, that's the worst of it. Every one worships him except Jack and me, and he would go and eat up Janet."

"Very likely."

"Jack and I hate him, and it's our party. Now, day after to-morrow he and Mr. Selwyn are to go to dine with that old Mr. Vane, who was secretary, or minister, or something, once upon a time, so we are safe. You don't like him either, you know, Mr. Carlton, so I tell you *very confidentially*, and we shall be jolly."

"How do you know that I don't like him?"

"Children—and angels—know everything," the sprite answered in a mocking tone.

"So it's settled then, you'll go, and be *entirely devoted* to me! And won't mind carrying a basket a part of the way?"

"Mind! I'll enjoy it, and be your slave forever!"

It was a delightful cool morning when the little party started; Susy according to agreement leading the way with Hugh, and the other four coming on together. They crossed the hill to the south, and then turning westwards struck into a path up a mountain side, which after sundry winds and turns led them to the plum orchard, with a small stream running through, and woods beyond it.

Merrily flew the hours. They gathered plums, and thought the poor sour things delicious! The young men pretended to fish, and talked learnedly of "flies" and mountain trout, and the girls looked on admiringly at their catching nothing. Then they sat on the grass and Tom Spalding and Hugh read aloud, by turns, "Enid and Elaine," the "Lord of Burleigh and the Gardener's Daughter," Jack and Susy, who were not poetic, in the meanwhile arranging the dinner, and getting bread and butter from the little farm beyond.

All was well again between Hugh and Janet. No word had been spoken of their difference. Maxwell had not been named, but they looked into each others eyes, and knew by the touch of each others hands, as he helped her up the rocky path, that they were friends—or more.

After dinner Jack made them climb to the mountain top to see the sunset, and here an accident had nearly marred their day, for Janet, going too near an edge, slipped on the smooth grass, tried to recover herself, but went slipping on, unable to stop, and must have fallen over a tolerably high precipice if

Tom Spalding had not caught her dress, and by throwing himself full length on the ground, kept her steady until Hugh and Jack could come to the rescue of both.

Even in the moment of rejoicing Hugh envied Tom the rescue, but Spalding's head was full of his own sweetheart, and he thought nothing of it.

The fright had sobered them all, and on the homeward walk it was only Susy and Jack who were inclined for the gay chatter of the morning. The other four followed slowly behind, the distance between the couples widening as they went, until the tête-à-tête was complete, Tom and Mary being far in the rear, the two children as far ahead. The young crescent moon was just rising over the hill as they drew near the springs, and Hugh made his companion pause to look at it.

"Wish a wish, and think of me," he said softly, as they stood with her hand upon his arm. "You don't know how often I have thought of you, as I have looked at the moon and stars in far away lands. You know it was by starlight that I saw you last."

"I have never told you," she said with a slight effort, "how I know that you were good to me that night. If you had given me the hope that I asked for when—when it was proved vain, I do not know how I could have borne it; but you had told me, and I felt that it was so."

"You cannot tell how hard it was to me to withhold the comfort you longed for so, but I knew that it would have been cruel kindness and I dared not."

"And you felt for me from your own sorrow?" she added.

"Yes," he replied, "I cannot tell you now, some day I may, what and how great my sorrow had been. I had lost everything, my home and—, but I will not talk of it, I don't want to sadden to-day. This time is happy if that were miserable. I have never had you to myself before, and I have so many things to tell you. When I got to the White Sulphur and found your sister Agnes there——"

"Hilloa! Miss Janet, shouted Jack from the hotel steps, "Come along, hurry up, here's a surprise for you."

"Confound the boy," muttered Hugh as Janet quickened her steps, "don't hurry so pray, surely there is time enough for anybody." But Janet hastened, as Jack continued to shout, "Make haste! See who's here; There they come!"

"Stay for one moment," said Hugh holding her back as they reached the steps, "only one moment, will you not give me one of your flowers and say this has been a happy day? His voice trembled with emotion, and Janet's lips were quivering also, but she was just about to do as he asked, when Maxwell, who had approached them unseen, said:

"Your mother and sister have arrived, Miss Berkley, they are eagerly expecting you. Will you not come in?" And, taking her from Hugh's arm, he led her into the passage, to be clasped in Mrs. Berkley's embrace.

The lights, the voices, the noise and bustle of the arrival, so confused Janet in her happy emotion, that for a few minutes she hardly knew what she was doing or saying. As soon as she could, however, she took a flower from her nosegay, and, turning to Hugh, who had just entered, said: "This is the flower that you wished, I believe, Mr. Carlton."

But Hugh did not hear her. He was bowing low to Agnes Berkley and holding her hand in his, and she, looking handsomer than ever before, with fire and feeling in her splendid eyes, glowing with color and warmth, was greeting him with such a look, that Janet turned pale and drew back, confounded and humiliated.

Mrs. Berkley then advanced to meet him, and Janet was astonished at the evident intimacy between them; for, although Hugh had several times mentioned them, he had by no means dwelt on the closeness of their acquaintanceship.

Mr. Selwyn, tired with his drive and dinner, sent for Janet to read him to sleep, and she saw Hugh no more that night. After she was in bed, however, Mrs. Berkley came to her room, and seating herself at her feet, said:

"I am so happy, my dear, to be with you once more; how do you think that your dear grandfather is?"

"Almost quite well," Janet answered; "he is not strong yet, and is tired to-night, but he has not had an attack since he reached the Hot, and now he walks very well."

"And you yourself, my dear? I am not satisfied about you, you look so pale and wan."

"Quite well, I assure you, only tired with walking so far."

"Ah, yes—walking! And did Mr. Carlton make you any confidences, my dear? Did he say anything of his troubles to you?"

"Troubles. No."

"I am glad—very glad, so honorable! Agnes now, what do you think of her?"

"She looks superb," said Janet striving to be cordial. "I never saw her so handsome."

"Ah yes, dear child, I think that she is better now, these things are so agitating! for a time she was really unwell—I was most anxious, but I believe that she has almost made up her mind, almost, but not quite. When she does decide I dare say that she will be quite well again."

"What is so agitating? I don't understand."

"Why, Mr. Carlton. He told you nothing of it? I admire that so much! I entreated him to be perfectly silent. I said: 'Mr. Carlton, not one word of this to any one, as you value Agnes's peace of mind and your own chances!' He proposed to her, my dear, at the White. She was so admired! so courted! quite the belle of the place! So many people

round her that I thought no *one* could make any impression; but then Mr. Carlton came and fell so desperately in love! and proposed too soon entirely, before she had time to know her own feelings—foolish, was it not, my dear?" And Mrs. Berkley moved to get a better sight of Janet's face in the moonlight. But she, white as her pillows, lay perfectly still, and "marred her friend's point with pale tranquillity," answering only "Yes."

"So foolish," Mrs. Berkley resumed; "but then a lover, you know! She could not decide, and he was so pressing. At last I said: 'Mr. Carlton, this will never do; my child's health will suffer; you do not understand the struggle that it is to her to own herself conquered, and yet she cannot quite reject you. Go away now, and in the winter, or autumn, come back and she may relent. Not another word to her or to any one.' So he went, entreating me to write to him, but I thought best not, and stayed on at the White until we thought he would have gone home, and I was so surprised to find him here! However, I saw the meeting to-night, and should not wonder if they arranged it soon, would you?"

Janet had seen the meeting too, and sickened at the recollection, but she lay quiet while Mrs. Berkley ran on in the same strain, endeavoring, at the same time, to extract some information of Mr. Carlton and his relations with her from the girl. In this she did not succeed. Janet, open as daylight to the rest of the world, had always had an instinct of concealment from her stepmother, and had long since learnt that silence and unmeaning words afford the same shelter to the weaker human vessel, that identity of color and absolute stillness give to the insect crouching on its leaf from the persecuting bird.

Nothing could Mrs. Berkley learn from the wide generality of her answers and opinions, but all that she wished to know she learnt that night; for after leaving Janet's room she opened the windows of her own, which looked upon the piazza, and talked long and earnestly, though in most subdued tones, with Maxwell, who stood without.

Only on one point he could not be certain. Up to that morning he felt sure that no declaration had been made by Hugh to Janet, but for the hours since he could not answer. Forced by Mr. Selwyn's desire to relax his surveillance for one day, he had hoped that no mischief would take place in his absence, but little Susy's adroitness had been too much for the accomplished schemer—and what might not have been said during that long day's companionship?

Mrs. Berkley allayed his fears somewhat by telling him of her conversation with Janet. "If he had said anything to her I would certainly have found it out," she said. "She was surprised at what I told her, and I dare say she likes him, but if he had proposed she would have flashed out at me in denial. She had nothing to say."

CHAPTER XV.

"If a twister twisting would twist him a twist,
For twisting his twist *three* twists he must twist."
[Mother Goose.]

Late as it was when Mrs. Berkley's conversation with Maxwell ended, and although she was really tired, both in body and mind, the indefatigable little woman could not yet allow herself to rest, and confessed with a sigh that the hardest part of her work was still before her. She had to tame a passionate woman, and teach her to be prudent. She had another visit to pay—it was to Agnes, whose room adjoined and opened into her own.

As she opened the door, Agnes started up in bed, and often as her mother had seen her, never before had she thought her so handsome.

Tossing back the heavy masses of her hair, she stretched her magnificent arms to meet Mrs. Berkley, crying:

"Have you done it? Is it safe?"

"As safe as I can make it; you must do your part now," answered Mrs. Berkley. "I have seen her, and told her what we agreed upon. She was still and quiet, I think depressed, but said very little. Since then I have talked with Mr. Maxwell, and he confirms what he said in his letter—he thinks Mr. Carlton is in love with her, but cannot be sure of what she feels."

"Feels," interrupted Agnes, "why, nothing; how can she, that pale-faced doll? Is there any power or love or passion in *her*? But I—Mother, I *must* have him; I will it, and he shall be mine." And, as she said it, she clasped her arms around her own body, and rocked backwards and forwards as she sat. It was not good to see Agnes Berkley as she was then. Her great sensual beauty, the strong light in her eyes, the very movements of her body, would have appalled a girl like Janet, or a pure, proud matron like Mrs. Selwyn. Nothing like it had ever come within their ken. She looked like the women of old time, of an older and a heathen civilization; but not often under a western and a Christian sky is such a passion expressed.

There was not much refinement or virtue in Penelope Berkley, but even she was terrified at the sight. Conventionality had for many years been the guiding star of her existence, and she felt now as if this young tigress were about to imperil all the safe and pleasant decencies of life, as if the miseries of long ago were coming back to her. She paused for a moment, and then answered sternly: "All is lost if he sees you look like that. Command yourself, Agnes. I cannot doubt that he was in love with you at the White, but he is fickle and has turned to Janet; now you must win him back. It ought to be easy to you. I have seen her, and told her that he is awaiting your answer—that will make her stand aloof; to-morrow I will work with him. The rest must be for you to do; but take care, the greatest care, not to go too far. To a man like that no beauty, no passion would atone

for a want of delicacy and dignity—in his *wife*."

"I understand," said Agnes coldly. "Don't be afraid, mother. The nature that I have from—*my father*—I keep hidden; not even you have often seen it. And the rest of the business—does—Mr. Maxwell make no progress with Janet?"

"I cannot understand it," said Mrs. Berkley. "He seems strangely uncomfortable and alarmed. Compared with any man, he ought to hold his own, and yet, he is afraid of Mr. Carlton, who has not been here a fortnight; he is most anxious to get him away, and have the field clear. I do not understand his feeling to that young man."

"Do you think he—cares—at all for her?"

"He loses no opportunity of telling me so," she said angrily; "calls her his first true love! He is sure that Mr. Selwyn will favor his suit, but has not spoken yet."

"And you—do you really still wish, still desire it? What possible good can it do you?"

"Power!" said the quiet little woman, with her eyes flashing. "At my age that is all that is left. Power over the girl that I hate, and the man who hates me! Yes, and power and money, too, darling, for you whom I love." And taking Agnes in her arms, she kissed her tenderly.

But Agnes pushed her away, crying: "Go away!—go away!—I consent—we must do it to get Hugh; but, oh, if he should ever know it!—if he should ever know it!"

"Would to God!" said Mrs. Berkley as she closed the door, "that she had never met Hugh, but I cannot help myself. I must!"

And all the time Hugh was wondering how early on the morrow he should be able to get Janet to himself and finish his half spoken declaration, with no more notion of being in love with Agnes than with Mrs. Berkley herself.

Not having got to rest before 2 A. M., it might have been supposed that Mrs. Berkley would have prolonged her morning nap; but far from such being the case, she was afoot betimes, and rightly guessing Hugh's habits, met him "quite accidentally" as he was returning fresh and rosy from the great bath.

"You are up early," she said; "and quite right, too, it is the best and brightest time of the day. Agnes and I are always early birds, but now she is not very strong, and so tired from the journey that I would not let her get up. I feel a little anxious about her."

Hugh was politely "sorry to hear it," and Mrs. Berkley, looking into his eyes, and seeing the most absolute indifference therein, decided at once on her plan of campaign.

"I am glad to have met you alone this morning, however," she said, "for, having rather a delicate commission to execute, I am anxious to have it over at once. Mr. Carlton, I hope that you will excuse my speaking freely?"

Hugh bowed, and begged her to be perfectly at her ease.

"Last night," she continued, "after leaving

the drawing room, I went to my dear little Janet's room." She felt Hugh's arm jerk at the word, saw the interest come to his face, and went unhesitatingly on. "The dear child has no secrets from me, Mr. Carlton, and seeing her look so pale and wan, I questioned her closely, and found that she was distressed and uneasy." Hugh listened eagerly.

"We must not be too hard on her," Mrs. Berkley said, with sweetly apologizing accents; "if there is some little tendency to—coquetry about her, most girls have it you know, and I sometimes think that Janet has taken both her own share and Agnes's, who, with her quiet, grave ways, is almost too careless about pleasing, but I am sure that Janet never means any harm, though, of course, in her position she ought to be doubly careful, and indeed, Mr. Carlton, she now feels it so."

"In Miss Berkley's position," repeated Hugh. "Pardon me if I don't understand. What is her position? and I don't see any coquetry about her."

"Ah, no! of course; I am so glad, but I was afraid, and, indeed, my dear sir, she, herself, is troubled. But, of course, if you say so, I am quite relieved."

"'Relieved!' pardon me again, Mrs. Berkley, but I am quite in the dark. What are you afraid of, and what is it all about?"

"Why, my dear Mr. Carlton, it really is such a delicate thing, to hint that a lady thinks that she has inspired a preference, but indeed the poor child fearing that she had flirted a little, thought that perhaps it was best, most honest, that you should be informed under the seal of secrecy. I can depend on you, Mr. Carlton, for the most absolute silence?" and Mrs. Berkley looked sternly at him.

"Any secret that you and Miss Berkley see fit to confide to me, I shall, of course, feel bound to keep," said the astonished Hugh; "but I have no suspicion of what it may be."

"Only the secret of her engagement." Hugh started as if he had been shot. "Yes, indeed, of her engagement! Now don't breathe it; don't hint at it; for Mr. Selwyn, who is a powder mine, would be in a blaze if he thought that we dared to speak of it, or even to consider it as one, until the time comes. You see the old gentleman has always sworn that she never should form any sort of engagement until she was twenty, and she is not yet nineteen. But Mr. Maxwell"—Hugh staggered as if at a blow, but Mrs. Berkley went on apparently unheeding—"although having the greatest respect and deference for Mr. Selwyn, could not see that he was bound to remain silent so long, especially as she was so gracious, and so—. Mr. Selwyn stormed at first, but he was so fond of Mr. Maxwell, that he soon gave his consent to the understanding, only it is not to be spoken of, even among ourselves as an engagement until she is twenty—then it will be announced and they will be married at once."

Hugh was speechless, and his tormentor, after pausing vainly for an answer, said:

"You will easily see that the situation is a difficult one, especially as she is so fond of admiration, and has such sweetly winning ways; there has been trouble about it already, and anything clandestine is so painful you know, and in your case Janet thought that it might be best and kindest to let you know just how things stood, and trust to your honor never to speak even to herself of it. Now, may I rely upon you?"

"You may rely upon me," Hugh answered, and turning walked away. How he felt we cannot attempt to describe. Bristling with hints, as Mrs. Berkley's speech was, his sharpest sting was not from it. It was, that loving Maxwell, she had yet been so kind and gracious to him the day before, notwithstanding the things which he had said of her lover only a few days previously. True she had been angry then—but how short-lived the anger had been. And he, who had thought her so true and loyal! He felt the ground cut from under his feet, his ideal lost, his faith in womanhood destroyed. He resolved to speak to her once more, and without openly mentioning the engagement, since Mrs. Berkley had laid such stress on that point, to satisfy himself from her own lips that all was over between them. Then he would go, he cared not whither.

Mrs. Berkley met Maxwell in the passage.

"Is it done?" he asked.

"My part is. Now to keep them apart. You and Agnes must do that."

"Thanks, most ingenious," he said, looking her in the face, "it is seldom that a man is so served by his friend."

"You are a fiend," she returned, hotly.

"I never call names," he replied, with perfect composure; "but there is this to be said, I love the girl."

"You dare to say that," she cried, flushing. "Well, I hate her, and therefore wish her no worse fate than your love. Go your way. I, too, love my girl and hate—"

"Me," he said, laughing. "Be it so. Hate is sometimes better worth having than love."

Janet came down stairs after the breakfast bell had rung, and placed herself at table between her grand-parents. Pale and set the young face looked, and Hugh tried in vain to meet her eyes; they were either fixed on her plate, or upon her opposite neighbor, Maxwell.

As they rose from the table Maxwell said to her, "If you will ride to-day, Miss Berkley, I have found a horse that will carry you nicely. I saw it at Mr. Vane's yesterday and ordered it here. Will you try it this morning?"

She was declining listlessly, when seeing Hugh standing by Agnes, she changed her mind, agreed to go, and said that she must return to her room at once to make some alteration in her habit, which she had not worn for some time.

As she was going down the long corridor, Hugh, who had not heard what had passed between her and Maxwell, followed her, for

he was bent on securing a last interview, and said :

"Miss Berkley, will you walk this morning; you said yesterday that you would like—"

"Yesterday," she interrupted, with a laugh meant to be gay, "yesterday and to-day are such very different things—you surely don't imagine that one wants the same things to-day as yesterday."

"I am undeceived," said Hugh, shocked at what seemed heartless levity. "Nevertheless, pray grant me this walk?"

"*Non, merci*, I was tired to death walking yesterday, and to-day—I am engaged."

"So I have heard," he answered, amazed, "yet let me, for this once, speak to you of myself, and—"

Treacherous! she thought, and interrupted—

"Very sorry, but really I have no time, good-bye." And, locking herself into her room, choked down her tears, and rushed into preparations for her ride.

Hugh stood pained and dismayed; then, "going off with the rebound," joined Agnes, and, after dinner, approaching the Selwyns took a ceremonious leave of them. He was obliged, he said, to start immediately for Mississippi, and did not know when he should have the pleasure of seeing them again. To Janet he hardly spoke, but he could not help the clasp of his fingers, and the appealing anguish of his eyes. They angered her yet more because she thought them deceitful as his conduct.

CHAPTER XVI.

Chateau qui parle, et femme qui écoute.

Nearly two years had passed, and again Janet Berkley was on the porch of her old home at Ashurst. It was a cold December evening, and with a large shawl wrapped round her she was walking rapidly up and down, evidently for exercise.

She looked paler and thinner than she had done even in her early girlhood, and there were lines about the brow and around the sensitive mouth, that told of fatigue and weariness as much of mind as of body. The expression too was quite different; gentle, but no longer serene; the indescribable change from girl to woman could be seen in every feature.

She paused as the door opened and her grandmother appeared.

"Is he awake?" she asked; "there are no papers, for the mail has not come yet; but I can read the new Blackwood."

"Not yet," answered Mrs. Selwyn; "he is still asleep, and, my darling, I must speak to you."

"Not out here, grandmamma, it is much too cold;" and drawing the old lady into the house, she stopped before the fireplace in the low hall, and glancing at a side door, added: "Let us sit here, we shall not disturb him."

"Seating Mrs. Selwyn in a large chair she put herself on the rug at her feet, dropped her shawl, and began pushing at the burning logs with a piece of lightwood.

"Jeannie, it is of no use to try to put it off," Mrs. Selwyn said at last with evident effort.

"Your grandpapa, my child, is very anxious about Mr. Maxwell; you know how much he has the marriage at heart; have you thought it over, my dear? In three days you know that he will be here, and Mrs. Berkley and—"

"I know, I know," interrupted Janet nervously. Have I thought it over? Why, dear grandmamma, there is not an hour, not a minute of the day when I do not think of it. If I only knew what I ought to do!"

"Ought, my dear?"

"Yes, ought—it is only that. Ought I to marry to please grandpapa? Ought I to take a man's love and give none in return?"

"My dearest, what a thing to say! 'Give none in return!' You must know that I would not for the world you should do that, and your dear grandfather, if he rightly understood, would not press you as he does."

"But grandmamma, if I *wish* to marry him?"

"My child, I do not understand. How without loving can you wish to marry him?"

"Ah, that's the riddle," and, burying her face in her arms, she whispered so low that her own ears hardly heard :

"As a shield, as a guard, to help, to keep me from—. Ah, dear God, be merciful, and show a poor girl what to do!"

For many minutes she remained in this attitude, trying, praying to see the right, and Mrs. Selwyn, leaning back in her chair completely puzzled, gazed at her silently. At last a slight movement was heard in the next room, and presently the door opened and a servant said : "Maussa is wake up and want Miss Janet."

Then Mrs. Selwyn spoke. Taking the girl's hand, she said very tenderly :

"Janet, all your life long you have thought of our pleasure before your own. But now at this moment you must think of yourself, and think well. I feel as if I were a traitor to your grandpapa, in advising against his wishes, now in his weak condition; but my darling, do not in pity to that weakness do what you might regret. In choosing a husband, child, a woman must consult her own heart, and marry only the man that her own heart approves."

"It is my own weakness that I pity, grandmamma, not grandpapa's." And first kissing her grandmother's cheek, she passed into the next room.

Mr. Selwyn was a piteous sight. A stroke of paralysis, six months before had changed the strong, hale old gentleman into a hopeless invalid. One leg lay completely dead on the couch and the left arm was not much better. His mind was still clear, his will as strong as ever, and his temper fearfully irritable. The household lived in fear of provoking some burst of rage which might exhaust

the enfeebled frame, and wife and grandchild watched every word and tone. The servant was hardly out of sight before he began:

"Well, Janet, *have* you made up your mind? Maxwell is coming next week, and you must not keep him waiting for your answer. I hope you are going to be sensible?"

"I hope so, grandpapa, but what is sensible now?" she asked, too accustomed to discuss the subject with him to feel any sensitiveness about it, and willing to while away an hour of the tedious invalid life, even by conversing on her private affairs.

"Why, child, to be done with nonsense and accept him at once. At once, indeed; why do you know," very solemnly as if she could possibly be ignorant of the fact, "that it is sixteen months that Maxwell has been hanging by the eyelids in this way? How long do you expect him to stand it?"

"Indeed, grandpapa, you know perfectly well that I refused Mr. Maxwell positively."

"Positively! Pooh—pooh. Who ever heard of a chit like you being positive. Old Poz—is for old men like me, child," and the poor old gentleman laughed feebly at his little joke.

"Decidedly, then."

"But I did not choose it to be decided, child. I said, 'Maxwell trust to me; the girl does not know her own mind—let her think it over, and I wager she'll come round;' you don't mean to make me lose my bet."

"At least it is your fault, then, that he hangs by the eyelids," said Janet.

"Not a bit, not a bit; last July, you know yourself, that when he came again you were *not* positive. I remember it perfectly, though you may think my memory weak," (he was getting angry now,) "it was the day after your stepmother wrote about that girl's engagement"—Janet winced but sat still—"the very next day, and you said, 'If Mr. Maxwell will give me time, I will try to return his affection.' Last July, Janet, six months ago; and they are all coming next week—Mrs. Berkley and Agnes and the young man, I forget his name, and all—Oh, Janet, I should die happy if I saw you in Maxwell's hands."

"Dear grandpapa, you are not to die for ever so long, and don't you think you will live more happily with me all to yourself, and no stranger in the way?"

"No stranger," said the old man, looking suspiciously at her; "what do you mean by that? Would you like some one not a stranger? Has that young fool of Ralph's been talking any nonsense to you?"

"Who, Allan? Oh, no, he has not indeed!" blushing deeply.

"I don't know. He was over here last week, and I told him you were to marry Maxwell, and he broke out and raved. He said he had never spoken to you, but hoped and so on. I told him that you were for his betters, and that he had better mind his books."

"His betters!" indignantly. "Poor, dear

Allan! No, grandpapa, he is only a boy now, but in a few years there will be no one better than Allan."

"You are sure it's not Allan?"

"Oh, no! Please don't say such things. I don't want to marry anybody."

"There was Belton now, but you refused him; and certainly you would not have Ainsworth—and let me see—at the springs—" But here Janet jumped up and cried with a forced laugh:

"Stop, stop, grandpapa. You must not insult the shades of my lovers. If I marry any one I suppose it will be Mr. Maxwell. Give me one week—only one week more, and I will if I can." She squeezed the old man's hand and ran out of the room. He complacently told his anxious wife that Janet was coming round, and little dreamt that the poor girl on her knees in her own room was weeping a passion of tears, as she thought and prayed, and thought and prayed again.

Well might she weep and think and pray, poor child; for the question which perplexed her now was, not whether she did or did not love Mr. Maxwell—the answer to that she knew only too well, but whether in refusing him she was not secretly cherishing a love for her sister's betrothed. In the July previous Hugh had fallen victim to Agnes' fascinations, and in one week they would both be at Ashurst. Would it not be better, Janet asked herself, to give herself to this man who loved her, and so put honor and duty doubly between her and Hugh Carlton, for this at least she could not doubt. She had given her heart utterly away, the bird in her bosom was flown, and instead of being gathered reverently and tenderly into another's breast, it wandered cold and forlorn without. And there was Maxwell, with his full devotion, his passionate worship, which left her totally unmoved. Aye, but would it always do so? A loving husband, she had heard, could always win his wife's heart, even if he had failed to touch it as a lover. Was this true? she wondered. If she married him now in esteem and respect, would not love come in time, so that she should be able to meet Hugh's troubled glance and Agnes' triumphant eyes without the sickening, jealous envy, which she now felt would make their presence a misery to her?

Would not a husband be, as she had said to her grandmother, a shield and a guard to her? But if so, why *this* husband? She thought of her gallant young cousin, of other men who had addressed her, but she felt that for none of these had she that admiration, that intelligent sympathy, which she had for Maxwell, and to which she turned as the best substitute for true affection.

Maxwell's conversation always interested her; his acquirements, his mind, were far beyond those of the other men whom she knew. With him there might be no love, but there would at least be an intellectual life, which

Janet's developing mind was beginning to value and appreciate.

But, then, did she esteem and like as well as admire him? And here Janet hesitated. She could hardly tell why, but she did *not* like him. He inspired her with a mistrust of his heart, which a woman seldom feels when that heart is devoted to her. Something about him, she knew not what, rang hollow to her touch. In his most brilliant conversation there was a strain of mockery—in his highest thoughts a touch of falseness. She recalled these perceptions—they were nothing more—with alarm. She thought how inscrutable were his jet black eyes, in which no expression, save that of power, ever shone. She remembered the opinion which Hugh had expressed of him at the Sweet Springs, and involuntarily the beseeching glance with which he had parted from her. The true blue eyes, that seemed to ask for love, came before her. But with the recollection came anger, as she thought that even then he had been Agnes' lover, and falselier far than the man whom he had accused. Indignation and mortified pride came to her aid, and the battle began again.

A few days of this mental struggle so told upon Janet that when Maxwell arrived, first of the expected guests who were to spend the Christmas at Ashurst, Mrs. Selwyn unasked, interceded with her husband for a delay in Janet's decision, and told Maxwell himself that "the child must have time to get accustomed to him."

Maxwell had nothing to do but to acquiesce, which he did with his usual good grace, but he gnawed his black moustache, and cursed in his heart at Mr. Selwyn's old-fashioned notions, which had made him insist on gathering all his kinsfolk together, for this, which he fully expected to be his last Christmas upon earth.

The Vincents had invited Hugh Carlton, and he was to arrive at their house from the West, at the same time as Mrs. Berkley and Agnes were to come from town. Maxwell felt very uneasy, and determined to lose no time in informing Mrs. Berkley of the danger, and to exercise the utmost vigilance himself, in preventing any meeting between Janet and Hugh.

In the meantime he exerted himself to make the best use of his time. Never had he been so clever, so amiable, so interesting. The neighbors invited to meet him were delighted; Mrs. Selwyn shaken, and her husband triumphant; only Janet grew paler and paler and shrank into herself. At last, only two days before Mrs. Berkley and Agnes were expected, the Ralph Selwyn girls insisted on carrying Janet over to spend those days with them, "because when would they ever get her again?" and she, glad of a little quiet and absence, felt almost light-hearted as they cantered off among the wintry trees.

Two tranquil days passed. Poor Allan had taken himself and his despair to town, so there was no love-making to be feared, and

Janet pleased by the kindly home-love around her, and Herr Müller's enthusiastic delight, felt soothed and tranquil, luxuriated in the old man's music and put troublous thoughts away from her until the third day, on the evening of which she was to return home. Then Mr. Selwyn and his sons rode off to a grand hunt given in honor of Mr. Maxwell, the girls drove to pay some visits, and Janet who had begged to be left quietly with her aunt, was sitting alone in the drawing room in a solitude very unusual in that populous house, waiting until Mrs. Selwyn should return from her plantation visits, when the door opened and Hugh Carlton stood before her.

CHAPTER XVII.

"A quattr' occhi."

Janet sprang up as Hugh Carlton entered, white to the lips, but the instinct to repress all sign of emotion comes as rapidly to some women as the emotion itself, and she walked down the long room to meet him, with no more visible excitement than the presence of any unexpected visitor might have caused, saying, easily:

"How do you do, Mr. Carlton? We did not expect you for some days. Have the others come?" And she forced the hand which she held out to him to be steady and firm. But it was no steady hand that clasped hers, and Hugh's voice was hoarse, and his face flushed as he answered:

"No. I came first, last night; and hearing that you were here, came to see you."

"You are very kind," she answered coldly. "My aunt will be glad to see you;" and she took hold of the bell rope, but Hugh, hastily interposing, said:

"No, don't ring. I don't want to see her. It is to you yourself that I must speak!"

"To me!" with deepening color. "I hope there is no bad news—is—Agnes well?"

Yes, I suppose so, but great heavens I must tell you, Janet," grasping her arm roughly. "Tell me the truth, are you going to marry Maxwell?"

"What right have you to ask?" she cried flushing crimson and shaking off his hand. "What possible concern is it of yours?"

"What right? What concern? All, everything. Answer me, for God's sake."

But Janet was far too angry to listen to any such appeal. He trifled with me once, she thought, does he mean to do it again? and drawing back a step she answered haughtily:

"You are not my brother-in-law yet, Mr. Carlton. I cannot imagine what your right can be, but I will answer you. I do mean to marry Mr. Maxwell," a resolution formed then and there.

"Oh, Janet, do not say so, do not I entreat you; you do not know all, and I, what shall I do?"

"What shall *you* do? Why nothing. My

marriage can be of no great consequence to you."

"Nothing in all the world is of so much," he answered, sadly. I see that you are angry with me, but I cannot help it. Janet, look at me; trust me; I know that you could not love me. When I found that it was so I went away, left you, as you desired; but yet I have sometimes doubted. Now, at this moment, with your whole fate depending on it, I must know the whole truth. You say that you are going to marry Maxwell; but do you *love* him? Answer me by all that you hold sacred.

Janet was so excited that she hardly understood all that Hugh's speech implied, but the solemnity of his manner and of his last words awed her. He stood before her with his hands clasped tight over each other, and his eyes fixed on her, with a look of such anguish as she had never before seen. Hesitatingly, she answered:

"I do not understand you, but I will tell you the truth. I have not yet promised to marry Mr. Maxwell, but I mean to—to-morrow. No, I do not love him, but I respect and admire him, and—I wish to marry him."

"And is that all—really all?" cried Hugh, his face brightening.

"All! is it not enough?"

"Thank God, there is yet time. I can save her; it will not break her heart," he exclaimed, and sinking into a chair, he covered his face with his hands, in an earnest thanksgiving.

"Break my heart," she repeated wonderingly, and then stood by him in silence, thinking. "It is broken already if that be all."

With a great effort for composure Hugh rose, and, offering her a chair, said:

"If what I have to tell you shocks you, forgive it, because it must be a greater shame and grief for me to tell than for you to hear, and if such a story is not fit for your ears, you may be sure that, as Maxwell's wife, such, and worse, would come home to you every day. Do you remember that long ago when we first met, and I showed you the snake that had frightened you so dead, I told you that man was the proper type to express deceit and crime? You were pained, and told me, in your sweet girl voice, that we should love all God's creatures. Yes, you see how well I remember every word that you ever said to me."

He paused with emotion. She made a little sign with her hand, and he continued:

"Well, the man—worse than any serpent of whom I thought then—was Maxwell."

"Mr. Maxwell!"

"Yes; but I did not know it. You may remember that the next day, when the news came of your father's death, I told you that I, too, had not long since lost my father?"

"I remember," she said gently. "You were very good to me."

"Good! My poor child, I had better have left you in the pool than have saved you for that man! I did not tell you that I had also lost a sister."

"No, but Mr. Vincent told grandpapa so."

"It is of her that I must speak. She was my half sister, six years younger than I, and the loveliest creature you ever saw, but so simple, so childish that we hardly knew if her mind were not wanting. Weak and undeveloped it certainly was. She was only twelve when her mother, a New Orleans woman, who had been the kindest of mothers to me, died, and she herself was ill of a long fever. My father never went back to the city after that, but lived entirely on a plantation that he had in a very lonely, wild part of the country.

There were no neighbors of our own class at all, and Lina had no companion but an old aunt of her mother's who lived with us, who was very deaf and infirm. She was sixteen and as beautiful as an angel, but had no more knowledge of the world than a child of ten." And Hugh stopped and wiped his brow.

"Go on," said Janet softly, she began to divine.

"She was not to blame," he cried fiercely.

"She was innocent as an angel, as Eve when she knew not good from evil, but she was left to herself. I was away at college, her aunt aged, my father a sad, broken-hearted man. A party of men came to a village near, surveying for a railroad. A stranger was hardly ever seen in that country; ours was the only good house. My father invited them, they came, one of them saw the child, her beauty, her simplicity, waylaid her in her solitary walks in the woods, and persuaded her to fly with him."

"My father pursued and found them, and when she told him, with fond simplicity, that M. Alford was her husband, that she had been married three days before, the villain told him, with a laugh, that a man did not *marry* an idiot! She had been fooled by a mock ceremony; he was tired of her already, her father could take her if he pleased, he wanted her no more."

"Oh!" cried Janet, starting up with her cheeks aflame; "did he not kill him? Strike him dead, instantly?"

"Listen—the old man sprang upon him, they grappled and fell, but his grasp relaxed and his arm sank powerless. Paralysis had come on in the moment of revenge, and when I, summoned by my aunt, hurried home, the villain had vanished from the country, my father lay dying in one room, and she—the unfortunate—in another."

"Oh, Hugh, Hugh, I am sorry for you," cried Janet, with the tears running down her cheeks, and forgetting, in the impulse of consolation, that she had never called him so before. She laid her slight fingers on his clenched fist, repeating softly: "Hugh, I am so sorry for you."

"God bless you, my darling," he said tenderly, but you do not yet know all. My father lived but a few hours after I had reached him. His speech and his mind both were so affected that it was with the utmost difficulty that I could gather what I have told you. And my poor Lina—poor innocent

victim, most happily lived but a few days more. At first she did not comprehend what evil had been done, but in her dying moments, as they say it often happens to the feeble mind, hers seemed to brighten, her understanding became clearer, and she died charging me never to attempt to revenge or punish the wrong which had been done her. She forgave her own injuries, but lamented the shame to us, and conjured me to keep forever secret the disgrace which she had brought upon her name. Say, Janet, say that she was innocent."

"Most innocent, most unhappy, most foully wronged. Oh, I hope, I hope that you were gentle with her!"

"I hope so," doubtfully. "I tried to be, but, oh shame! and shame by a woman, is hard to bear. But I promised all she asked, and she died happy. I tried what I could to find out the man, but in vain. My aunt knew nothing but the facts of the flight, the pursuit and the miserable return. She supposed that it had been one of the gentlemen who had dined at the house a few weeks before. She told me what names she could remember, but her deafness made her very uncertain. I inquired in the village, and found that one of the party, who, the innkeeper said, did not seem to be an engineer, had stayed for some time after the others had left. He believed that his name was Alford, but could not be quite sure. I wrote to the president of the company, to ask if there were a person of that name in its service. He said 'No,' and so the quest—and for what purpose was I making it?—failed. One man only had seen the villain, the boy who drove my father in his pursuit; he was the son of my sister's maumer, and between him and the old woman they kept it quiet. I swore them to secrecy, and went back to finish my course at college, meaning afterwards to go to Europe. On my way there, Janet, I met you, and took with me the memory of the dear little face that might, had you so willed it, have made earth all heaven to me; but—don't cry so dear—what do you say?" For Janet, through her streaming tears, cried:

"Oh Hugh, if you loved me, why did you leave me and give yourself to Agnes?"

"Janet, were you not secretly engaged to Maxwell? Did you not send me word that you loved him, and beg me to go?"

"I! oh, never."

"Janet, my dearest, my treasure, can it be, is it possible that you love me?" and he clasped her in his arms.

For one moment she lay upon his breast, with his cheek pressed to her's—then pushing him from her she cried:

"Ah Heaven—Agnes—you are her's."

"No—before God I am not," he cried vehemently. "Listen, Janet; some most foul treachery has been here, and I will not have our two lives spoiled."

"Tell me," she said trembling, "who told you that I was engaged to Mr. Maxwell?"

"Your mother; you remember that evening

when I begged you to say that to you it had been a happy day, how you left me without a word?"

"Because he—Mr. Maxwell—came between us, and when I offered you the flower you did not take it, but held Agnes' hand and looked at her."

"Because she looked at me"—with a shudder.

"That night Mrs. Berkley came to my room, and told me that you had proposed to Agnes at the White—that you were desperately in love, and were waiting until she could decide for your answer."

"And you believed her?"

"Had you ever said one word to me? Besides, I had seen that look."

"Janet, she is a devil. This is all her work."

"Was it not true? Oh, Hugh!"

"Was what she told me next morning true? That you had confided to her that you feared I was attached to you; feared you had been too gracious, seeing that you were already engaged; thought it honorable that I should be told how things were, but begged me not to say a word of it, even to you, as Mr. Selwyn had ordered that it should not be mentioned for two years?"

"You could not have believed it?"

"I did. It seemed honorable, and I knew what an upright little soul you were. I tried to get one word with you, but you would not—"

"I thought you were treacherous to both Agnes and me."

"And so I went away as you bade."

"Hugh," said Janet, with the calmness of despair, "I see it all now. Agnes loved you, and my stepmother has parted us. We have fallen into a trap, and there is no help for us."

"But there shall be help," he exclaimed, trying to clasp her again, but she eluded his grasp. "Do you suppose that I will submit to this?"

"Agnes loves you," she replied.

"I fear she does," he returned. "I cannot tell you, Janet, the ways, the wiles that they used to draw me to her."

"Not she; only her mother."

"Chiefly, I believe; but, oh, Janet, she was very willing. God help me! I believe she does love me; and I—"

"Will love her, too, when you forget me," she interrupted. "Hugh, I will not let you be dishonorable for me or break another heart. I thought, an hour ago, that mine was dead, but now I feel that I can be happy without you, knowing that you did love and did not deceive me. Go on, now, and tell me when you discovered, what I already know, that Mr. Maxwell is the murderer of your sister and father!"

"Two hours ago," he answered. "I brought with me from Mississippi the servant of whom I told you, and this morning he begged to go to the hunt with Mr. Vincent's drivers. As we rode up to the meet Maxwell met us. Presently Cyrus pulled my sleeve, and begged

to speak to me. I saw that he was violently excited, and went apart with him. He told me that 'that man was Mr. Alford!' and pointed to Maxwell. I could not believe it, and assured him that he was mistaken. He was very much excited, but very positive, and told me to look at the back of his neck and see if there was not a scar there; that, in his struggle with my father, he had fallen back on a brass fender, and cut his neck deeply. Janet, I cannot tell you how I felt when, riding up behind the wretch, I saw, half hidden by his collar, just such a scar as Cyrus expected to find! How I did not shoot him then and there I know not, but Lina's voice and charge and my oath came to me, and I turned and rode away. Then I thought of you. Could I let him have you too? I told Vincent that I felt suddenly sick, it was true enough, and left the hunt. I determined on the way here that if you loved, really loved him, I would be silent forever to you and to all except to himself, but that I would tell him that I knew of his villany and would expose him if ever he gave me cause by making you unhappy."

"Oh, Hugh! would you have let me marry him?" with a shudder.

"If you had loved him what could I have done? But, thank God, you are safe."

"Yes," said Janet wearily, "safe from him, and now I must make myself safe from you. Go, Hugh, we must never meet again; you must keep your troth to Agnes, and I will tell grandmamma that I cannot marry him, and between us we will find some way to pacify grandpapa. Your sister's secret shall be safe, and as for me I shall do very well now that I am not sore and wounded any longer. Good-bye."

"You cannot really determine so, Janet."

"I must," she said faintly. "I cannot ruin another woman's life, much less my father's daughter's. Love is so much to a woman, Hugh, and it is only a little part of a man's existence. Good-bye, my friend; let us be glad that we know each other now, and that we can be happy and good apart."

"I can be neither happy or good, Janet," he said gloomily, taking her hand. "I see, now, that this is a conspiracy between Maxwell and your stepmother, and they shall repent it; before God, they shall repent it. Good-bye, but only for to-day."

Once more he caught her in his arms, and kissed her passionately. She broke away from him, and he running out into the hall and down the steps, threw himself upon his horse and galloped off.

"Maussa! Maussa! you leave your whip, you leave your whip," shouted the boy who had been holding the horse, holding up a hunting whip with a butt handle, and curiously plaited leather thong.

"Run after him with it," said Janet, noticing the curiously twisted leather, with that strange attention to trifling detail which sometimes accompanies what would seem to

be all absorbing excitement. "Run after him, and you will catch him at the gate."

The boy ran, shouting; she saw the whip thrust into Hugh's hand, and then turned back into the house, feeling as if the whole world had changed and turned in the last hour. Realizing, that for her, life was at an end, but feeling somehow infinitely freer and lighter than she had done when expecting to share it with Maxwell.

CHAPTER XVIII.

'I guess 'twas frightful the e to see.'

[Coleridge.]

An hour later Janet, dressed in her habit, met Mrs. Ralph Selwyn in the hall.

"My dear," said that lady, "are you going to ride? I thought that you meant to stay with me this morning."

"I must go home, dear aunty—I am obliged to go at once."

"But until the girls come back there is no one to go with you, and there is not a horse in the stables except your own."

"I don't in the least mind going alone. Say good-bye to the girls for me, and please don't try to keep me, Aunt Carry, for indeed I have to go."

Mrs. Selwyn looked wonderingly at the flushed face and excited eyes, and said kindly:

"I will not try to keep you, dear, but I am sorry to have been detained so long by those whooping-cough children this morning, for I wished to have a little talk with you. Your uncle was telling me last night of what your grandfather had said to him of Mr. Maxwell. You look pale and worried, Janet, as you never looked before. My dear child, I hope that my poor brother does not harass you about him."

"I have been worried, Aunt Carry, but it will soon be over now."

"Because," proceeded the kind lady, "you know, my dear, your grandfather is not his former self now, and, rather than you should be teased into what you do not like, your uncle would help you to pacify him."

"I hope it will not be necessary, aunt."

"Why, do you mean to accept Mr. Maxwell?"

"No, no; I hate him!" A wild, fierce light shone in Janet's eyes, such as had never been there before, and her aunt said, soothingly:

"No, no, my dear; no need for hate. If you don't like the gentleman, refuse him, but love is no reason for hate."

"Sometimes," said Janet. "Good-bye, aunt; thank you, I must go," and she ran off to the stable, whence her aunt soon after saw her riding quickly down the avenue.

The old German doctor came out of the library and looked after her, and, in her perplexity, Mrs. Selwyn turned to him, saying:

"You have heard the talk about Mr. Maxwell and Janet, Herr? She tells me that she does not mean to marry him. She says she hates him."

"Ach! a girl's hate!" said the old man, laughing. "Was that Mr. Maxwell who rode away as if the Devil were behind him? There has been one great quarrel, then?"

"Mr. Maxwell! Has he been here? I did not know?"

"I saw, an hour ago, a young man, tall and strong, go away with a red, angry face. He rode like the wild huntsman. Peter said he came to see the fraulein, and that they quarrelled had. He swore as he got to horse."

"That must have been Mr. Maxwell. Janet did not tell me he had been here. I hope that Mr. Selwyn will not be very angry."

Once past the gate and alone in the solitude of the pines, Janet checked her horse, and rode more slowly.

Anxious as she was to see and consult with her grandmother, she had first to consider how she could, without revealing Hugh's sad secret, convince Mrs. Selwyn, and to persuade her to join in convincing her husband that it was impossible for her to marry Maxwell.

Janet trembled, as she thought of her grandfather's disappointment and rage at the failure of his cherished scheme. She felt, with bitter self-reproach, that had she at once decidedly refused Maxwell, her grandfather would, after some grumbling, have acquiesced; but now, having so long allowed him to hope for the accomplishment of his wishes, she absolutely dreaded the effect of her answer upon him.

Weakness and violence are a terrible combination, and the poor girl thought with horror that a second stroke might be the result of any angry excitement.

One thing she had determined. She would not, if possible, see Maxwell again. She intended to write to him that night, and she hoped that he would leave the house in the morning. She feared that should he meet with Hugh some harm might come of it. Hugh had sworn to hold his hand, but Maxwell had made no such oath, and should he couple her refusal with Hugh's presence! What passions might not be concealed under that passionless exterior!

All this was to be accomplished to-day, this short winter day already half over—but the poor child thought with dismay that this was but the half of her work.

She must keep her lover's honor pure. The revelation of the morning, the mutual declaration of love, must be put away as though it had never been made.

She thought of Agnes with her apparent calm, and divined, rather than understood, that a strong, sensuous nature was thereby concealed. She acknowledged to herself that whatever Mrs. Berkley's motive might have been, love was Agnes's, a love too animal, too sensual, for the delicate minded girl to comprehend, but the strength of which she

respected even while she shrank from contemplating it.

No! Hugh's honor and Agnes' happiness should be safe, and she—she trusted that after a time a sort of peace might come to her also.

The sore feeling of having been deceived, of having loved and been neglected, had passed. Hugh and she had both been duped—duped by a woman whose malevolence she could trace for years past, but no wound from another hand could hurt as the fancied one from his had done, and, miserable as she was, she felt that she could endure.

If only the next week were over! Could she, and could Hugh, act as it would behoove them to act through these coming days? She trembled at the thought, and determined to write to him also, assuring him that she could never meet him again but as a stranger, and praying him to find some pretext for going away, and thus spare them both the ordeal of the Christmas gayeties.

Thus resolved, her mind reverted to the business of the hour, the necessary communication to her grand-parents, and she was still riding slowly along lost in thought, when the fidgeting of her horse recalled her attention.

She then became aware that she could not be far from where the "drive" was going on, for the sound of horns, the baying of dogs, and the shouts of the drivers chasing the deer before them, were to be heard at no great distance to the left.

Nothing was further from Janet's wishes than to find herself surrounded by the joyous hurly-burly of the hunt, and perceiving that she was nearly half way home, and that a byroad branched off to the right, which would take her there by a *détour* of not more than three miles, she turned her unwilling horse in that direction, and, putting him to the gallop, prepared to go as fast as possible to Ashurst.

She had not ridden more than a mile, however, before she discovered that she had not altogether avoided the hunt, as a horse tied to a tree neighed as hers approached.

She saw no rider, and supposing that his "stand" must be some little way off, rode on hoping to be able to pass unnoticed. The road in which she was, an abandoned cart track overgrown with grass and young scrub, was by no means smooth riding, and she was watching with the instinct of a country rider to see that her horse did not put his foot into a hole, when he suddenly started with such violence as almost to throw her from her saddle, and then backed and snorted with fear. Involuntarily she thought of her first meeting with Hugh, and was about to turn aside to avoid the unseen object which had caused the start, when she caught sight of it.

It was a man lying flat on his face, with his arms outspread and his felt hat placed curiously upon his head, so as to cover it entirely from view. She thought that it was a negro asleep, and called to him:

"You must not lie there in the road. I had almost ridden over you." But he did not stir, and the perfect stillness of the figure struck her, although as it lay in the long grass she could not distinctly see it.

Jumping from her horse she approached, fearing she knew not what, but as she bent down an awful sense of recognition seized her, and it was with a half suppressed cry that she removed the hat revealing a ghastly sight.

Maxwell lay before her apparently dead, the back of his head, crushed as by a blow, one mass of clotted blood. Forgetting all, Janet threw herself on her knees beside him, raised his head, cried aloud for help! help! But no help came. Putting forth all her strength she attempted to turn him over—to see if he were indeed dead, if life were quite extinct; but just as by a great effort she had succeeded in doing so, and placed her hand on the heart to try if any movement remained, a cry far wilder and more bitter than any that had yet escaped her broke from her lips, and she fell senseless across the corpse.

Under the dead man lay, its heavy butt covered with blood, the whip, which she had that morning seen put into Hugh Carlton's hand. How long she lay there Janet never knew, nor how long it was after consciousness had returned that reason could not be controlled. The sight of the whip had instantly suggested murder, an idea which had not previously occurred to her, she having thought only of a fall from his horse, and when, regaining her senses, she sat up, and began to think and observe, she saw by the broken and trodden grass that there had been a struggle. The ground did not keep the print of feet, but there were tracks of horse hoofs in a muddy spot, and a piece of coarse cloth hung on a brier hard by.

With eyes sharpened and quickened by love and horror, Janet noted all these things: then for some moments she sank down with her face buried in her hands. At last she sprang to her feet, took up the whip with a shudder, and plucked the cloth from its brier. Wrapping both it and the bloody whip handle in her veil, and not daring to cast another look at the still face, she remounted her horse, left the road and struck directly into the wood.

After riding for half an hour, she gained the very pool in which she had met the snake, approaching it, however, from an opposite direction. Wrapping the veil yet more tightly around the whip, she rose in her stirrup and flung it deep into the water below. Down, down it sank into the thick leaves and water plants, far out of sight.

"Lie there," she muttered, "no one will dive in Dead Man's Pool for you! He saved me here once, I will save him now. That," with a look at the water, "will tell no tales, and I can be silent. Oh! God, grant me strength!"

Then she rode straight home, dismounted at the stable, went to her room, washed the blood from her habit, even took care to

throw away the reddened water, and went down to her grand-parents with burning cheeks and eyes, 'tis true, but with a manner as resolutely quiet as ever was worn by martyr.

In the meanwhile, Janet's homeward ride had not been as unobserved as she supposed. Young Tom Vincent and James Cardwell had been posted together at a stand not far from the high-road, and had seen her when, at the sound of the horn, she turned aside into the cart-track.

"Mr. Maxwell's stand is down that way," said Cardwell; "he is a lucky fellow to have his sweetheart go to visit him."

"Miss Janet knows nothing about it," replied Vincent, angrily. "She isn't that sort of a girl at all. She went that road to get away from the hunt, you may be sure."

"She will come on Maxwell all the same though."

"Very likely."

"What do you think of Maxwell?"

"Deuced clever fellow—too clever for most—I'll tell you who thinks so—my cousin, Hugh Carlton."

"Why! What does he say of him?"

"Oh, nothing, but I can tell, by the way he looks when Maxwell is mentioned, that he hates him."

"Carlton isn't sweet on Miss Janet himself, is he?"

"Oh, no; engaged to her sister, Miss Agnes, but he hates him for all that."

"Where is Carlton's stand?"

"Nowhere; he had a headache and went home."

"That's queer, I saw him ride by an hour ago."

"He must have come out again. Which way did he go?"

"Down that same road."

"Well, that is the shortest way home."

"Yes, but does Carlton know the woods like that?"

"He may. He was here once before when I was away at school. Here come the dogs. Now look out!"

It was a long "drive" that day. The deer (five in number) running to the left of the high-road, passed out of shot to Vincent and Cardwell, and, then turning southward, led dogs and men along round by Oakwood Swamp, and Blackwater reserve. Two had fallen, but three fine bucks held gallantly on, and it was not until 4 o'clock that they took to the pines and made a run for Vincent's Creek.

It was on this track that Maxwell had been stationed, and it was in following up the dogs that the drivers came, much as Janet had done, upon his dead body, lying now upon the back and staring with set glazed eyes up at the sky.

Murder was in those quiet days such a very rare occurrence in the country, that the drivers and the gentlemen, whom they hastily summoned, thought at first only of accident. He had fallen from his horse, they said; until

they noticed the horse tied many yards away. They then grew pale and began to search.

But they themselves had so broken the grass and leaves, and trampled the ground, that the indications of violence which Janet had seen were lost, only in one of the dead man's clenched fists a small piece of white cloth was found.

After a few minutes of hasty counsel messengers were dispatched. For the doctor—not that he could be of any use, but because in trouble one always sends for the doctor, for the sheriff and for the coroner, but as these functionaries lived twenty miles off, it was decided to carry the body to Ashurst, and one of the young Selwyns was sent to warn his aunt of the terrible event, and to bring a wagon.

The younger men were told by Mr. Vincent, who was a magistrate, to search the woods for five miles around, and to stop and question any suspicious characters who might be found.

"Poor fellow!" said the good-natured gentleman, "he certainly hadn't an enemy in the country. He has been murdered for the sake of plunder."

"No," said Tom Vincent, who was kneeling by the body, "for here is his watch in his pocket."

"Any money?"

"No, but he might not have brought any out. Could he have had a quarrel?"

"Why, Tom?" cried Cardwell, who was a blundering creature, "you know what you told me yourself just now: that your cousin hated him!"

"What, what is that?" cried several voices.

"What devil's foolery is that?" repeated Mr. Vincent. "Cardwell, what do you mean!"

Cardwell was very much frightened at the eyes eagerly turned upon him, but he answered stammeringly:

"Only Tom Vincent told me that his cousin, Mr. Carlton, hated Mr. Maxwell."

"Tom," said his father gravely, "what did you say? And had you any authority for your words?"

"Cardwell is a thundering ass!" cried Tom Vincent, in a rage. "I only said that I thought Hugh hated Mr. Maxwell from the way he looked, but that he had never said a word about him."

"Yes," answered Cardwell, very angry in his turn, "you need not try to get out of it; and you know, too, that I told you that Hugh Carlton came down this same road just about one o'clock."

"You must be mistaken," said Mr. Vincent. "Carlton went home with a headache soon after ten."

"I tell you," returned Cardwell, doggedly, "that I saw him at one come down that road and turn off in this track; and when I told Tom so, he said it was the short cut to your place. Yes, and then about two, we both saw Miss Janet Berkley come down here."

The elder gentlemen looked at each other, and then Mr. Ralph Selwyn said:

"We lose time in talk. Ride about, young men, and search the woods and negro quarters for five miles around. Mr. Vincent gives you full powers. The murderer cannot have gone very far."

CHAPTER XIX.

Then spake the gentle Alcestis: "Hear, oh golden-haired Apollo, and thou, Zeus, the all powerful! Suffer me, now, oh ye gods, to depart into the sunless land, and let my lord, Admetus, remain in pleasant Thessaly."

[Greek Legends.]

There was an uncomfortable silence as the younger men mounted and rode away. Then Mr. Grey, the eldest of the remaining gentlemen, said:

"Now that those lads are gone, I must say that this looks very like a quarrel."

"I hope, Vincent, that what that young dunderhead, my nephew, said just now has not annoyed you; of course, no one thinks of Mr. Carlton," said Mr. Cardwell.

"Of course not, of course not; boy's idle talk," returned Mr. Vincent, looking nevertheless somewhat worried. "But if Hugh and Miss Berkley did both pass this way this morning, I wonder that we did not hear of this—this event before," looking towards the still form from which they had withdrawn a little way.

"I left my niece, Janet, at my house to-day," said Mr. Selwyn. "I do not see how she can have been here; this is not the road to Ashurst, and she was to remain with us until one of the boys should return from the hunt to ride home with her. I think that your nephew must have been mistaken, Cardwell."

"Perhaps so, but Selwyn, let me ask, you know, I suppose, that it is generally believed that your niece is—was, I should say—engaged to this poor fellow. Indeed your brother gave me to understand as much last week. Have you thought of breaking the news to her—the shock!"

"I will send a note to my wife at once. I should have done so before," said Mr. Selwyn, "although as things have turned out, I am glad to remember that she told me last night that she did not think the poor thing much wished the marriage—thought it chiefly my brother's doing. Still this will be an awful story to tell her."

And taking a leaf from his pocketbook he wrote a note to Mrs. Selwyn, telling her of the murder, begging her to break it to Janet if she were still at Buckstone, and if not to come at once to Ashurst. Having written he looked at the group of negroes, none of whom were his, and said:

"Vincent, can you let your boy Cæsar take this note."

"Certainly—here Cæsar."

Cæsar came up and received his instructions, but hesitated for a moment, and then said to his master:

"Mas' Hugh Carlton boy Cyrus, him tun fay sick dis mornin' when him see Mas' Maxwell. He say he know him long time ago an' him berry bad man."

"Did he say anything more?" asked Mr. Selwyn eagerly.

"No, sir, he say him know him, but him maussa no know him—not know him fo' bad like him be, he say him gwine tell Mas' Carlton."

"Where is Cyrus now?"

"He lef' de meet wid Mas' Carlton—gone home to we house."

"Go on at once then to Buckstone." And a most uneasy silence fell upon the party who were awaiting the arrival of the wagon on which the body was to be removed.

Never, in all its decent, decorous existence, had there been such a night known at Ashurst. Within and without the house were gathered almost all the neighbors, gentle and simple, white and black.

The rapidity with which news, and especially ill news spreads, is marvellous in all countries, but most marvellous in the South, where the negroes are never too busy to leave any work, and speeding swift and silent as shadows through the forest, tell the tale of horror from plantation to plantation.

The Christmas holidays having begun they were now quite at liberty, and by nightfall the tale of Maxwell's murder, with innumerable variations, was known throughout the country, and busy tongues were at work with suggestions and suspicions innumerable.

Nothing, however, could really be done until the arrival of the coroner. He did not come until the next day at noon, and then, empanelling a jury from the gentlemen present, they proceeded at once to the necessary ghastly examinations around the bed on which lay stretched Maxwell's tall and stately form. These—and they were soon over—completed, they went to another room, and began the work of eliciting all possible information.

The facts proved as yet were few, but now the question, "Who last saw the deceased alive?" had been asked, and the answers were startling, for it was shown that, after Maxwell had been posted at his stand, before eleven o'clock, no one had seen him until the discovery of his corpse at half after four.

"Was it likely that *no* one should go down a public road in all those hours?" asked the coroner.

James Cardwell, putting himself forward, testified that the road was not a public road, properly speaking, but rather a by-path, and that he had himself seen Mr. Hugh Carlton go down it at one o'clock, and Miss Janet Berkley about two."

"And the man was found dead, dead and cold, you tell me, at half after 4? Call Mr. Hugh Carlton," said Mr. Brown, the coroner.

There was some little delay before Hugh entered, and while awaiting him an overseer stepped up and said that he had been superintending the felling of some lumber a mile or

two farther down the same track, and had seen Mr. Carlton come galloping down as if the Old Boy was after him.

"At what o'clock?"

"Between one and two."

Hugh, who had been walking up and down the garden, trying to compose his troubled thoughts, then entered. He had no notion that any one suspected him, and did not know why he had been sent for. The coroner questioned him closely.

"Had he gone down that cart-track?"

"Yes, he had."

"Had he done so for the purpose of meeting Mr. Maxwell?"

"By no means. He took it as the shortest road to Mr. Vincent's plantation."

"Had he seen Mr. Maxwell?"

"He had."

"Was he alive when you saw him first?"

Hugh started and exclaimed:

"Certainly he was alive. What do you mean?"

"Did you have any conversation with him?"

"Yes, we talked for some minutes."

"Of what nature was the conversation?"

"I do not see why you ask that, nor why I should answer," said Hugh, flushing.

"Because, Mr. Carlton," said Mr. Brown gravely, "it is rumored that there was ill feeling between Mr. Maxwell and yourself; that you had shown it by looks, and your servant by words. You, by your own account, were with him later than any other man that we can hear of, and, I am forced to tell you, that there are grave suspicions entertained of you."

"I swear," answered Hugh readily, "that I know nothing of this deed. There was ill feeling between us. I did not expect to meet him in the wood, and, coming suddenly upon him, lost my temper, and high words passed; we quarrelled violently, in fact. But I gave him no blow, and rode away as fast as possible that I might give none."

There was truth in his look and tone, and the coroner said with less severity:

"Then, Mr. Carlton, you assert positively that you left Mr. Maxwell alive and unharmed at about half-past one o'clock?"

"I assert it positively."

"Then I am compelled to request the presence of Miss Janet Berkley."

"Of Miss Janet Berkley! but why?" exclaimed Hugh, who, not having been in the room, had heard nothing of what had passed previously.

They explained the case to him, and it was easy to see how the intelligence agitated him. Mr. Ralph Selwyn said that he would go for his niece, and left the room.

Janet was in no state to stand any further excitement. The terrible effort of the night and day had already almost exhausted her strength.

Tom Selwyn had burst in so incautiously with his news the evening before, that Mr. Selwyn had heard it all, and an access of his disease had immediately supervened.

In the bustle and excitement Janet had escaped notice, but she knew that had it not been for this painful pre-occupation her grandmother could not have failed to observe that in her distress there was no surprise. The relief, however, from feigning ignorance was so great, and the pent up feelings of so many hours burst forth with such vehemence, that Mrs. Selwyn was rather astonished at the greatness of her grief; and, not suspecting that it was the living, and not the dead, lover for whom she mourned, let her creep away to her room in quiet. There Mr. Selwyn now found her; knocking at the door, he said:

"You must come down stairs, child; they want to question you."

Janet's heart stood still.

"Don't be frightened, but they say that you passed near this poor fellow's stand yesterday, and I do hope that you will be able to prove that he was alive when you did so, for if not it will go hard with Carlton. He is the last person that was with him and confesses to a quarrel, but of course denies the murder."

Now it had never occurred to Janet that, the terrible witness of the whip once removed, any suspicion could fall upon Hugh. She had looked forward to a life-long secrecy and silence, but had not anticipated any such ordeal as this. Now it flashed through her brain that, in order to save him, she must inculcate, or at least lead others to inculcate, herself—that the doubt, removed from him, would fall on her. But, how to do this? She had no time for thought, for Mr. Selwyn, exclaiming:

"Come, my dear, waiting won't make it better; best get over it at once," much as one speaks to a child at the dentist's door, seized her arm, and hurried her down stairs and into the jury-room.

Never before had Janet looked as she did then. Her hair, bound closely round her head, her heavy, clinging black dress, the crimson spot on each cheek, the large, dilated eyes, the small hands nervously grasping each other, struck every eye.

All rose to greet her. They put her in a chair, and, while the kindly country gentlemen, most of whom had known her from her childhood, looked on with pity, the coroner, courteously expressing his regret at being obliged to intrude upon her distress, asked if she had seen Mr. Maxwell the day before—how, and when?

One look of agony Janet darted upon Hugh. And he—he sat with death in his heart. Then she turned to the coroner and opened her lips as if to speak; but no sound came, and he repeated:

"Did you see Mr. Maxwell yesterday, Miss Berkley?"

"I did," she answered, and her voice rose high and shrill.

"Where and when?"

"At the Vincent Creek stand—I don't know at what o'clock."

Here Mrs. Ralph Selwyn, who had followed Janet into the room, interposed, saying that it

was past one before her niece had left Buckstone the day before, and that she could not have reached the "stand" until after two.

Janet's misery was so painfully evident that the coroner, hurrying his last question, unwarily put it in an affirmative form:

"And he was alive when you left him, my dear young lady, I think you said."

"He was alive," she cried, "when I met him, and—when I left him"—and with a piercing shriek she fell forward insensible.

Every man sprang up. Mrs. Selwyn caught her head, and she was carried off to her own room. Hugh was paralyzed with horror.

The coroner looked at his notes impatiently.

"We make no progress," he said. "Miss Berkley's evidence, so agitated, so cut short, amounts to nothing. We do not even know how her last sentence was to have ended." This was said very slowly and with emphasis.

The gentlemen looked at each other, and there was a dead hush, broken by a movement in the crowd without.

A negro man entered with a resolute air, and, walking directly up to the table, said:

"I am Mr. Maxwell's servant, sir, an' I must tell what I seen myself. When Miss Janet come home las' evening she lighted off to de stable. Her dress was all wet in front an' her sleeve cuff wer red wid blood. I seen it myself."

"You lying knave," broke out Mr. Selwyn.

"Mr. Selwyn, you must not intimidate the witness. Speak out, boy."

"I seen it myself, sir, an' Joe too."

Joe, summoned, utterly denied the whole story, but rather avoided meeting the other's eyes.

Negro testimony not being of much value, the jury hesitated, and the coroner said with evident reluctance:

"I think, Mr. Selwyn, that we must ask to see the riding dress which the fellow speaks of."

"Oh, no! Shame! shame!" several voices cried. But Mr. Selwyn said that he would bring it, and left the room. When he returned he was very pale. The long habit hung over his arm. The front of the skirt and a spot on the body were still wet, wet with water, indeed, but it was too evident that they had been washed. The white cuffs were not to be found, and Mr. Selwyn said that his niece was still insensible, and that her maid knew nothing.

"Then it appears," said the Coroner, with some impatience, "that the sole witness is this bit of cloth. Our facts amount to this. This gentleman is dead; his skull fractured, apparently by some blunt instrument; his watch left on him; his purse removed, and, by-the-by, where is his gun?" They looked at each other. No one had thought of the gun. It certainly could not have been any where near him. Mr. Brown resumed: "His gun gone, probably stolen with the purse, and the only two persons who passed that way depose that he was alive at one and two o'clock; while you, gentlemen, all swear that he was cold and

stiff at four. Miss Berkley's habit has been wet, and a negro says it was bloody. Gentlemen, we can, of course, give no verdict as yet."

"The sheriff and his parties are still scouring the country," said Mr. Vincent; "until they return we can know nothing. Let us adjourn to reassemble when you choose."

They adjourned accordingly, but as it was late and raining heavily all but the very nearest neighbors remained at Mr. Ralph Selwyn's invitation to spend yet another night at Ashurst, the coroner remarking significantly that he should on reassembling require the presence of both Mr. Carlton and Miss Berkley.

CHAPTER XX.

"'Las, the noble heart, they thought,
She with grief is sooth distraught."

[Mrs. Browning.]

Janet had been laid on her bed and restoratives applied by her aunt and the doctor, but life returned very slowly. The swoon lasted so long that they were becoming seriously alarmed when at last she opened her eyes with a long, quivering cry as of physical pain. To their question she made no answer, looking at them with wild dilated eyes that expressed nothing but fear.

"Her brain is turned," the Doctor said. "Poor thing the grief and the shock have been too much for her. Was she very much attached to him?" for the Doctor had come straight from old Mr. Selwyn's room to Janet's and had heard nothing of the evidence given.

"No," said Mrs. Selwyn, "she told me only yesterday that it was a mistake to suppose her engaged to him; but they were friends—and the shock," and the good lady stopped suddenly, for as she spoke she remembered the fierce "I hate him" that had broken from Janet and she colored so deeply that the Doctor noticed it.

"Oh, well, well," he answered soothingly, "much best so of course. She is quite distraught now however. I don't think that she hears a word we say. Put her feet into hot water, and cold applications to her head and keep her perfectly quiet, don't let any one disturb her. I will return presently, but must go now to Mr. Selwyn."

After some time Mr. Ralph Selwyn came up, and trusting to his wife's assurance that Janet was quite unconscious, told in loud whispers all that had passed down stairs, concluding with:

"I do not of course believe that she can know anything at all about it, but it made a great impression—an awful impression, I can tell you. The fellow told his story so boldly and the dress being so wet! What can she have been after?"

"Of course she has nothing to do with it," said Mrs. Selwyn angrily. "There are a thousand ways in which she might get her dress muddy and so wash it. She was always

going after plants and flowers in all sorts of places—but, Ralph, no one seems to know that Mr. Maxwell was at our house yesterday. I did not mention it, not knowing if it was of any consequence."

"At our house—impossible—he was on his stand all day."

"I assure you that he was at Buckstone early in the day, and he and Janet quarrelled, and then she told me *she hated him*."

"She did!" with a look of horror. "Did you see him?"

"No, I was out. She received him alone; but Herr Müller saw him go away, and said he rode furiously, and looked red and angry."

"Red"—Maxwell never looked red in his life—dark as a Spaniard."

"That may have been the Herr's way of talking. Anyhow, Ralph, I do feel unhappy, there is some mystery, and look at her! I wonder if she really is as insensible as the doctor says. See how her eyes shine and look this way. I almost fancy that she hears, although she does not speak."

Mr. Selwyn approached the bed and looked closely at her.

"She is going mad," he whispered to his wife. "A brain fever, you may depend on it, and I have no confidence in Dr. Hewitt, a solemn owl! I wish the old Herr was here."

"Oh, yes. Do send—send at once for him. What o'clock is it? dark and raining? Never mind—send a carriage, and let Tom go in it and bring him up the first thing in the morning. He will do anything for Janet."

All this time Janet lay still, almost motionless. She caught enough of the whispers about her to know that suspicion had been turned from Hugh to herself, and, persuaded of his guilt as she was, (for she knew nothing of his answers to the coroner) all her thoughts were now bent on maintaining the mistake. She knew herself to be so unapt at deception, so unskilled in invention, that she was afraid to do or say anything for fear of detection, and could think of nothing except to remain obstinately silent, and let her agitation and her wet habit tell their own tale. She tried to remember what she had heard of circumstantial evidence, and of law, but her head ached too violently for her vague knowledge to arrange itself, and deciding on silence for the present, she postponed consideration of future action, and lay still with clasped hands and wide staring eyes, all through the long, long December night.

Under Mr. Ralph Selwyn's direction the housekeeper had hastily made arrangements to accommodate as many persons as possible. Every corner of the large house was filled, and several of the younger men were quartered in one large room, which, intended for a ball-room, occupied an entire wing of the house. Here beds were laid upon the floor, in which half a dozen youngsters were expected to sleep, and here (abandoning by common consent the ordinary sitting rooms, made gloomy by that terrible Presence, and by the vicinity of the apartment where Mr.

Selwyn, closely attended by wife, brother and doctor, lay in a most precarious state,) most of the company gathered round the fire.

Hugh had preferred the solitude of his own room, and Mr. Vincent had also retired, so that the talk flowed freely.

The wide fireplace was heaped with good oak logs, which glowed and crackled, and from the lightwood knots tongues of flame lit up the quaint blue and white tiles, where Abraham sacrificed Isaac, girls in short petticoats skated over ice, David struck off Goliath's head, and fat Dutch vrows peeled carrots and filled ale jugs, in close and curious contiguity.

The cheerful blaze, and the punch which the old butler offered, somewhat cheered the awed and depressed spirits of the men, and various theories and opinions were advanced, all shrinking, with natural chivalry, from any expression which might implicate Janet, although every man there was conscious of a secret fear "that she might know something about it." They had talked for some time before the remark which produced the most effect was made, and made by no wiser man than James Cardwell, who, since his altercation with Tom Vincent, seemed to have taken a positive aversion to Hugh.

"After all, Mr. Brown," he said, turning to the coroner, "I think that what Miss Janet said, and her wet dress, may just be this: She said, 'He was alive when I met him, and when I left him—' and then she shrieked and fainted. Now, suppose she found him wounded, and so got bloody, and he died afterwards?"—

"James," said his uncle, severely, "do not present such absurd ideas. If Miss Berkley had known anything of the matter, she would instantly have got assistance, of course."

"Yes," persisted the nephew, with the obstinacy of a stupid man, who, having got hold of an idea, cannot help harping on it, "that is if she had no reason for hushing it up; but she was certainly very much upset, and Carlton was to have married Miss Janet's sister."

The men looked at each other, and the coroner, who was comparatively a stranger in the country, said: "Did not some one say that Miss Berkley was to have married Mr. Maxwell?"

"That was not so," answered Dr. Hewitt, who had entered the room a few minutes before, "Mrs. Ralph Selwyn told me so this afternoon, but that blow must have been given with great force, and he could not have lived two minutes after receiving it; there was no lying wounded in the case."

"You will observe," said Mr. Brown, "that we really know nothing, as I said before; not even that this is a murder. It is very evident that you gentlemen are happily unaccustomed to cases of this terrible sort, for you never thought of looking for the weapon which dealt the blow, nor for his gun, possibly one and the same thing. You conclude that he was murdered, because you say he was too far

from where the horse was tied to have fallen from it, but he may have been moved, or the horse may have been tied after his death by some party or parties unknown, who concealed the fact in order to make off with the gun and purse. Without further proof, either positive or circumstantial, I shall doubt whether to believe it murder."

"What do you propose doing next?" asked Mr. Grey.

"To make, to-morrow morning, a thorough examination of the locality. I got here too late to do it to-day; and also to summon that servant of Mr. Carlton's, who is said to have expressed a hatred of Mr. Maxwell, and of whom I never heard until five minutes ago. Decidedly, gentlemen, you are not used to murders."

"Long may our ignorance continue," said Mr. Grey, as the others looked somewhat sheepishly at each other. "But pray, Mr. Brown, let me ask, was not your last question to Miss Berkley rather what you lawyers would call a leading one? eh!"

"Ah! you have me there—the words were not out of my mouth before I felt it. Highly unprofessional! but you see, the young lady was too much for me! I never had to examine such a witness before. To-morrow, however, I will be sternly incorruptible," answered Mr. Brown, laughing and stirring his punch. "Please God, I may not be obliged to torment her any more."

"I incline to believe," said the doctor, "that it was a blow. Falling on the flat ground, unless, indeed, some stone or stump may have been there, would not break in the head in such a very remarkable way. There is an absolute cavity, as if made with a ball, between the ears. My notion is that it is a murder for robbery, and that his own gun was used for the purpose."

"Possibly," answered Mr. Brown. "I never heard anything of Mr. Maxwell, and never saw him until just now—but, looking at him, I should say that when that style of man is murdered there is generally a woman in the quarrel."

"Oh!" A sort of shudder ran through the room.

"Mark me," said the lawyer, "I don't mean that he falls by a woman's hand, but those extraordinarily handsome men get into scrapes—lead into scrapes, and then some one revenges them."

There was silence for some moments, and then old Mr. Grey said gravely:

"We should not suspect the dead. To-morrow we must search the ground carefully, for it is evident that we have done things slackly. You see we were so *very* unprepared for such a case."

"Murders generally are unexpected," returned Mr. Brown drily. "But here comes Mr. Selwyn. I hope that your brother is better?"

"Very ill indeed," answered Mr. Selwyn; "his mind wanders incessantly. Fortunately he does not speak of Maxwell or ask for his

granddaughter, but he remembers that Mrs. and Miss Berkley were to have arrived here to-day, (I suppose that the rain has delayed them,) and he fancies that we prevent his seeing them. Do, Hewitt, come and try to pacify him."

They left the room together, and the others went to their various sleeping places.

Of all the miserable watchers of that most miserable night, there was none whose sufferings could be compared to Hugh Carlton's. The horror that filled his mind was utterly indescribable. Not dreaming that Janet was trying to shelter him, the terrible thought had occurred to him, that meeting Maxwell in the wood, in the angry, enraged state of mind in which he—Hugh—had left him but one short hour before, she had instantly broken with him, and that he had, in his mad rage, attempted to compel her to marry him. In self-defence what might she not have done?

This thought, wild and improbable as it may seem, took possession of his brain, and effectually banished sleep, for thus, and thus only, could he account for the flushed, burning face, the wild eyes and the look of despair which Janet had cast upon him as she entered the room.

He would have given worlds for one moment's speech of her, but besides that she was said to be still unconscious, he felt that a certain *surveillance* was kept upon him, and that at least one-half of the company regarded him with suspicion. Gladly would he have increased this suspicion if, in so doing, he could have turned it from Janet; but although he pondered the point long as he tossed upon his bed, he saw no way of doing so, his first statement having been so clear and unqualified. And so the night came down on the saddest and gloomiest Christmas Eve that had ever come to Ashurst.

CHAPTER XXI.

The dark shall be light,
And the wrong made right.
[Scott.]

Morning brought no change in the situation. The coroner, and the gentlemen who had gone with him at daybreak to search the scene of the murder came back no wiser than they went. Only the messenger who had gone to Mr. Vincent's to summon Hugh Carlton's servant returned with the intelligence that he had not been seen since the morning of the hunt. This, which all agreed was a suspicious circumstance, was the only fresh news at breakfast.

The waiting and suspense became very tiresome, and the jury persuading the coroner to let them disperse, to come together at his call, went off to their several homes, leaving at Ashurst only the Ralph Selwyns, Mr. Brown and Messrs. Vincent and Carlton, whom he had requested to remain.

These were standing together in the hall, looking after the departing guests, when old Herr Müller, who had arrived that morning from Buckstone, came down stairs from Janet's room, and asked to be shown the room where the dead man lay. It opened from the hall, and his exclamation on entering startled them all:

"Ach, Gott," he cried, as he saw the beautiful pallid face, "why I know him, right well I know him! And has he thus ended? It is sore pity of him. He was a bright illumined mind—but bad—bad always to his wife."

"His wife!" exclaimed all. "He was not married, Herr—Maxwell was never married."

"Why call you him Maxwell? Alford is his name. I knew him and his wife. I was there. I helped them when the child was born. It is twenty—*nein*—it is twenty-three years gone away. See there the cut she gave him. I sewed it up myself. Ach! scissors of women give an ugly gash;" and baring the breast the old man showed a curious, irregular scar on the left side, a little above the heart. The gentlemen looked at each other, and Mr. Selwyn said at last:

"There may be something in it, for I think, but am not quite sure, that Alford was the name of Maxwell's stepfather."

"Not sure, not sure," repeated the old man testily, "right sure am I. It was in the New Hampshire State—a little town in those great mountains. I had rested there in my wanderings, and the people were kind to the stranger; they were a simple, good folk. But there came this man—he was not of them, but came to his wife; she was a stranger, too. Ach! but she was young and handsome, and so fond, so wild for him! She lived in a little white house by the lake where I used to fish, and came often to talk to me, for she was much alone. My heart was sore for her then, for I saw he loved her no more, but she knew it not, and believed all he told her. At last her baby was born, and he came not; I and one old woman were her only stay."

"Then after long waiting, and letters, ah! letters upon letters, he came; and then, poor thing, he cast her off—he told her to go back to her own people, for he would none of her. He was only a lad—*ein bursche*, and yet so wicked!"

"And what then?" asked Mr. Selwyn; for the old man paused.

"Then! Ach there was *der Teufel*; he had no heart at all, though he dead is I say it. He told her to go; he was going far, far away, he said; he could no more. She sprang at him with her big scissors and cut him, which you see. He bled, bled, bled, till he grew pale—pale as now. She ran for me, she cried and bewept herself as women use; I sewed up the cut; he soon was well and went away, and she stayed heart-grieved. I was pitiful, and went to her often. At last she got a letter from her mother, and she said, 'This makes it easy;' then she went, and I saw her nevermore; but he, he is there," pointing to the bed.

"Do you know her name or where her people lived?"

"It was another State; not New Hampshire. I remember not the name. Her name, too, I know not, but he called her Nelly. Nelly for the wise Penelope."

"Penelope!" ejaculated Hugh and Mr. Selwyn at the same moment.

"Yes, Penelope! Why not? and, *ach Himmel*, there she is! behold her!"—pointing.

Every man there wheeled round as he spoke, and saw through the open door Mrs. Berkley and Agnes, who having been delayed on the road, had just arrived, and had in the unsettled state of the household entered unannounced.

All stood silent but the old German, who, not at all comprehending the situation, ran forward, and seizing Mrs. Berkley's hands exclaimed, "*Ach meine liebe dame!* is it thus and so that I meet thee? I knew not thou wast told; here, here he is! Didst thou forgive him, and dost thou remember me, thy old friend? And this, this *schönige frau*, is this my little child, the little *vöglein* I used to call? *Ach*, dear lady, here he is. The old man could not save him for thee this time, as once thou rememberest! but thou forgavest; thou lovest still."

Running on thus, the old man had drawn the utterly bewildered Mrs. Berkley and Agnes up to the bed. Astonished and expectant as the others were, they were far from being prepared for the wild cries, shriek upon shriek, which burst from the terrified woman. Agnes stood by, cold and pale as marble, without saying a word or attempting to help her stepmother, until the old man, appalled at the storm he had raised, turned to her and said:

"Speak to her, *frau*, tell her you remain to her if he is taken, his child is left, and *Gott, bewahr!* how like to him you are!"

It was true! The two white, still faces, the one on the bier, the other beside it, were cast in the same mould, line for line. Only the beard which Maxwell usually wore, and which was now removed, and the brilliant color which had now fled from Agnes' cheeks, could have concealed the extraordinary likeness; and Hugh felt with a shudder that he now knew how it was that Maxwell's face had puzzled him when first they met. With an impulse of pity and loyalty, however, he advanced towards her, and was about to take her hand, but, looking up, she said coldly:

"So! You know it all, it seems. Mother, stop screaming. Why should you cry for him? He never did us anything but harm. How did this happen?" pointing to the dead man. "And who told you all about it?"

The utter hardness, the absence of any sort of feeling in her expression and manner was so extraordinary that Hugh stood mute, but the good Doctor answered:

"I—I, my *frau*; I, who knew thee when thou wert a babe—*der armes kind*. I knew thee at once! Ah, my dear lady!" as a fresh scream from Mrs. Berkley answered this

speech. "Take her up, you who are strong, and take her to a bed, and to the women."

Messrs. Vincent and Brown lifted the distracted woman, and carried her from the room, followed by Herr Müller; and then, Agnes, turning to Mr. Selwyn and Hugh Carlton who remained, said, in the same harsh, unnatural voice, "It is all true. I felt sometimes that it must come out. But one month, only one month more, would have made me safe." And she looked at Hugh.

"Do you mean to say," he said looking fixedly at her, "that you knew of this, this devil's plot, and let it go on? Do you know what would have been your sister's fate, what she would have been if you had succeeded in marrying her to him?"

"My sister's!" she said with a laugh that made them shrink. "Yes, if you like to call her so. I knew all about *him* from the day of my father's, (I suppose you would say,) I mean of Mr. Berkley's death. I heard them talking about the will and found it all out. I consented then, for I thought it was safest, though I *hated* him," and her eyes flashed. "But when they changed and made the plan about Janet, I did *not* consent. No, Hugh, I did not consent, until, until I knew you; then when I saw, when I found, oh! I would have given her to all the fiends in hell to keep you for myself; for I love you, oh I love you!" Her voice broke, and dissolved in a shower of tears, and for once she looked not handsome, but lovely.

Hugh could not speak, but Mr. Selwyn said, sternly:

"It is the most infamous plot that ever was hatched in a Christian country. Carlton, do not touch her."

"No one shall touch me," she said, regaining her composure, and drawing her veil over her face, she walked slowly from the room, not casting another look at either father or lover.

Hugh sank into a chair, and covered his face with his hands.

"Did you ever hear anything so horrible?" said Mr. Selwyn. "A beautiful devil! What an escape you have made, Mr. Carlton; however this other business turns out, at least you are well quit of such a wife."

"And you think with the Italian, that the gallows is preferable," answered Hugh, bitterly. "I agree with you, Mr. Selwyn, better death than such a life! But do you yet understand the thing? Had no one any suspicion before?"

"I do remember," said Mr. Selwyn slowly, "that when we were all very much excited and provoked about poor James' will, George Berkley's wife (a very clever woman but rather sharp-tongued) said some severe things about Mrs. James and Maxwell. I remember her saying that they must have known each other before, been old friends, or some such thing. But, I own, I thought it spite, because as they came from the same part of the country, and one was a lady and the other not

quite—quite so—you understand, Mrs. George never could bear Mrs. James.”

“And that was all?”

“Yes. Maxwell behaved so very well about the will, and Janet—why, bless my soul! probably, from what Agnes said just now, the whole will was a patched up affair between Maxwell and Mrs. Berkley—or Mrs. Alford, as it seems she was. Shouldn’t you say so now?”

Mr. Brown, the coroner, who was a law-year, returned to the room while Mr. Selwyn was making his puzzled remarks, and now said:

“Excuse me, Mr. Selwyn, for making a suggestion. As far as I can see, this is a very tangled affair, affecting character and property, and so far the only evidence is that old German gentleman’s reminiscences, and what the young lady has evidently been surprised into confessing. Now, let me suggest that, when Mrs. Berkley comes to, you let Mr. Vincent and myself, as we have heard all the story and are disinterested persons, get from her such a statement as will make things clear, and at the same time keep them quiet; for, I suppose, that you would like as much privacy as possible.”

“You are very kind, Brown,” answered Mr. Selwyn. “The fact is we planters are children in matters of business. I shall be infinitely relieved if you will take the whole thing into your own hands, make things clear and legal, and save as much scandal as possible.”

“The old gentleman,” said Mr. Brown, who appeared very much puzzled by Dr. Müller, “has given Mrs. Berkley an opiate, which will, he says, soon make her sleep, and the young lady sits like a stone, with her veil down, speaking to no one. We can but wait. Let us take a turn to the stables, Mr. Selwyn, and look at the horses.”

They walked off. Hugh, left to himself, sat on the piazza and thought over the varied scenes which had happened since he sat there last. He remembered Janet as she was then, in her simple, open-hearted girlhood; as he had next met her, in Virginia, in her gracious, high-bred beauty, and then, as she stood before the jury! He remembered the look of anguish, and the shrill voice, and shuddered at the possible cause. Was it possible, could that noblest, sweetest nature, that purest soul have such a stain? Yes, Hugh thought with enthusiasm, it was possible; there were positions, dangers, in which even she might have struck—struck, and been all the more noble; and the young man vowed a solemn vow in his heart that, once this weary work ended, he would devote his whole life to hers; that, no matter what her punishment might be—death, he knew, in such a case, was not to be feared—he would share it, and that, when free, she should be his loved and honored wife. And he prayed fervently, as he sat, that it might be granted unto him to bring back peace and happiness to her poor wounded spirit.

He was so absorbed in thought that he did not perceive the approach of a party of horsemen who were crossing the lawn, until they were almost at the steps. Then Mr. Selwyn and Mr. Brown came hurrying from the stables, and Mr. Vincent and Herr Müller from Mr. Selwyn’s room, and he saw by the eager greetings that the new comers were persons of importance.

It was in fact the sheriff himself, with his posse, and his first words were:

“Well, gentlemen, we have solved your mystery and found your murderer.”

“Indeed!” cried Mr. Selwyn. “That is good news. Come in Smithson and tell us all about it. Who is it, and where is he?”

“Dead,” replied the sheriff. “Where are you, Mr. Coroner? It will, I suppose, be another case for you. This is the whole story: You remember you told me that a servant of Mr. Carlton had expressed a hatred of Mr. Maxwell. Well, I got his description; he was not to be found at Mr. Vincent’s, and the people there said that his speech was different from that of our people. I feared that he would make for the swamp, and spread my men out in that direction to intercept him, for once in the swamp it is hard to find anybody. That is the reason why we have been so long. I suppose the fellow did not know the country, and so kept as near as he thought safe to the high road by which he came here, and we did not at first go in that direction. But last night I got word that a man, well dressed, but with a torn shirt front, (you remember that bit of white cloth,) and speaking with a twang, had been seen hiding in the bushes near Abbott’s Cross-roads. We started at once, and got there at daylight this morning; they told us that he had come to the store at the cross-roads, and bought bread and whiskey late the evening before, and had paid for it with a ten dollar bill—not very usual for a negro, you know. He had spoken of going towards H—, so we followed and soon came upon him. When he saw us he knew at once who we were, took to the bushes and ran. We followed, but the road was thick and we did not gain much. I called to him, threatening to shoot, but he held on until his foot, I suppose, slipped, for he was full in view, not a hundred yards ahead, when he stumbled and fell. His gun seemed to catch on a bush, for it went off, right into him. When we got to him, he was bleeding from the lungs. We tried to stop the blood and keep the life in him, but it wouldn’t do. I said: “Now, my man, you had better make a clean breast of it, and tell us why you killed Mr. Maxwell.”

He said: “I don’t know any Mr. Maxwell, he name Mr. Alford, and I kill him cause he threaten for shoot me.”

“Why did he threaten to shoot you?” I asked.

“‘Cause I know him long time ago in Mississippi. An’ when I see him to the hunt I tell Mas Hugh. He, Mr. Alford, am berry bad man. Mas Hugh say, ‘No, he, Mr. Maxwell,

an' you nebber see him before;' but I know I right, an' tell Mas Hugh so. Den Mas Hugh say, 'go home now to Mr. Vincent and wait till I come.' But I want for see de hunt, an' I stay bout de place. I walk bout till I tired, and the deer no come, so I start for go to Mr. Vincent house, and I see Mr. Alford by he stan'. I say, 'Mr. Alford, wha' you come here for? He turn berry pale an' say, 'Why you call me Alford? My name Maxwell.' I say, 'You know me, Mr. Alford. You member me on ole Mr. Carlton plantation in Mississip.' Den he turn roun' for get him gun an' say, 'I shoot you if you call me dat name here.' An' I say, 'I call you dat name, an' you shan't shoot me.' He run for him gun. I catch him. He trow me down an' tear me shirt. Den I jump on him an' knock him in he head. He drop same like he dead. Den I talk to him, an' he be dead. Den I fraid, an' I take him gun an' him money an' I run way.

"Did you ask him," said Mr. Selwyn eagerly, "what he had done that he thought him so bad?"

"Yes; but he was failing fast, and I could get nothing from him but 'long time ago.'"

Hugh drew a long breath of relief.

"I asked him," continued the sheriff, "if any one had seen him or knew what he had done? He said, 'No, nobody.' He was very weak then, dying, and I asked him if he did not repent, but he only said, 'No, I ain't sorry; him berry bad man. Tell Mas Hugh him berry bad man.' And so he died."

"I congratulate you, Mr. Carlton," said Mr. Brown turning to him, "on being so completely cleared, and the young lady too. This boy of yours, are you very much attached to him?" for Hugh looked terribly agitated.

"I knew him but little myself," said Hugh, after a pause. "Indeed, I have been so little at home for many years past, that I know hardly anything of my own people, but he was a favorite of my father's, and, therefore, when I wanted a servant to come on with me this winter I brought him. He told me at the hunt the other day just what he told you, and he had known Alford, as he called him, when I was away at college."

"I must summon the jury," said Mr. Brown, "to give the necessary verdict. I am sure that we are all delighted to have no need for painful doubt," and he bowed to Hugh. But Hugh could not answer. He went to his room, bolted his door and gave himself up to a rapture of thanksgiving and joy which we dare not attempt to describe.

It is needless to relate the second meeting of the jury. Herr Müller and old Mrs. Selwyn were called to prove that Maxwell had at one time in his youth been called Alford, and Hugh was asked what knowledge his servant could have had of him. But he simply repeated the statement which he had already made, and no further questions were asked. The jury gave their verdict and finally departed, it being arranged that Maxwell's funeral should take place on the following day.

Hugh also obtained permission from the sheriff to have his too faithful follower buried with decency, and Mr. Vincent despatched his own head driver to attend to it.

In the meantime Hugh was burning with curiosity and anxiety about Janet. No one suspecting that he had any peculiar interest in her, he could get only vague answers of "much the same, thank you," from Mr. Selwyn, who began to look rather surprised at the frequency of his questions. Neither of the Selwyn ladies was visible, and he was entirely at a loss until late in the evening. Entering the house by the garden door, he met Herr Müller coming down stairs.

The old man started, and cried out: "Why *Gott bewahr!* Here is the red angry young man who rode from Buckstone! You are pale enough now *Junker*. Whyfor came there you at all?"

"I came to see Miss Janet Berkley," said Hugh with desperate courage. "And I wish I could see her now. Do tell me, Doctor, how she is, and when I shall see her."

"See her—see her—why *Junker* it is only six hours that she lay as a figure—only the great eyes burning—but now—"

"Yes, now? You have told her everything and she is better is she not?"

"*Himmel!* I tell her everything? Her aunt *meine dame* told her they the murderer had found, a poor negro boy, to see if she would understand."

"And did she?"

"Yes, she pressed her hands and cried, 'Thank God,' and then she cried, and cried, and cries still. Her aunt would to stop her, but I told her no, so she will outweep her grief, and the fever goes itself away. She will be right soon. But these others, these ladies which I understand myself not at all—*ach!* they are terrible women."

"Have they said anything more?"

"Only to curse all things. Poor thing she was not always that; she loved and forgave, but he—he made her so; and the young one who sits, and sits and says never a word—she is *his* daughter, *ein teufels kind*."

At this very time, however, Janet was lying quietly, crying no more. The beneficent flood of tears had carried with it the heat, the bewilderment and the confusion of the last few days, and although weak as an infant she was composed and able to think.

She knew nothing as yet of Mrs. Berkley and Agnes, or of their connection with Maxwell; Mrs. Selwyn not thinking her strong enough to hear it, and her great grief now was the falsehood which she had told in order to screen Hugh.

"Ah!" thought she, "How angry he will be when he knows why I said it. When he knows that I believed him guilty! that he had broken his promise to his sister. How could I have thought so! Oh, I am weak, weak and not trustful. If I had trusted him as I ought from the beginning, all this would never have happened. I am justly punished. And far into the night, the poor child prayed

forgiveness for her sin, and strength for her coming lonely life.

CHAPTER XXII.

ADIEU !

Maxwell had been buried. The grave, solemn words of the funeral service have, perhaps, been seldom said over a worse man. But it is one great beauty of that service, never heard until the mighty angel has claimed its victim, that in it man is not considered in his works, but in his being; not for what he has done, but for what he is; a creature of God taken home to his Creator. And so the same words are spoken for the good and the bad, even as "He letteth His sun shine on the evil and the good, and sendeth His rain upon the just and the unjust."

The congregation dispersed very quietly after the blessing had been given, not without a feeling of relief that "this terrible business was over." Only Messrs. Selwyn, Vincent, Brown, and Carlton returned together to Ashurst, to make the necessary arrangements with Mrs. Berkley.

"It seems a terrible thing," said the soft-hearted Mr. Selwyn as they rode along together, "to go to a woman the very day of her husband's funeral, and after such a death too, and force her to tell all her sins. Does it not, Brown?"

"How much of a husband?" demanded Mr. Brown. "I am not up to any compassion for Mrs. Maxwell, Selwyn. But I do feel great pity for poor Jem Berkley—I knew him well, and I suspect that he had some things to bear. Your family, too, may still have much unpleasantness to go through, for if this lady 'cuts up rough,' as we say, she may give us great trouble."

Arrived at Ashurst, Messrs. Vincent and Brown, with Herr Müller, went to their interview with Mrs. Berkley, Mr. Ralph Selwyn to his brother, and Hugh, left to himself, wandered forlorn, until seeing Mrs. Ralph Selwyn in the shubbery, he joined her there. She was, she told him, enjoying the fresh air, released from her attendance upon Janet, who had been able to go to her grandfather. "I do not understand it all," she added. "My idea is that Janet came upon Mr. Maxwell dead or dying in the wood, and that it so turned her brain that she really was delirious from that moment, and not able to give a clear account of anything. She certainly was in a state of high excitement when she left our house that morning."

Hugh then took heart of grace, and told the whole story of his love and troubles to the kind lady, suppressing only the special piece of villany of which he had rushed to warn Janet. With deepening color he told how in the ensuing conversation on the very day of the murder each had discovered the other's heart, how they had confessed and how they had parted. And he ended by conjuring Mrs. Selwyn to stand his friend with

Janet's grandparents, and to contrive that he should have an interview with her as soon as possible; "for indeed," he said, "I shall never feel safe or secure from some malign influence until I have her sweet presence again, with no doubts to come between us."

Mrs. Selwyn listened wonderingly, and entered into the story with the interest that a true woman always feels in a love tale, readily promising to do all she could for him.

"She has some other trouble, I think," she added. "I do not know what. It may only be that her nerves have been so terribly shaken, but she cries at a look, and seems still afraid. At all events the sooner you meet the better, and I will arrange it when this business of Mrs. Berkley (if we are still to call her so) is over."

A servant came to summon them to the house, and returning to the drawing room they found old Mrs. Selwyn there, with Mr. Ralph Selwyn and George Berkley. The latter had been written for, as soon as Herr Müller's revelations had been made, and had but just arrived.

These three sat in solemn conclave, waiting for the two envoys who now entered—Mr. Vincent looking hot and red, Mr. Brown pale but triumphant, and holding a paper in his hand. The latter advanced to old Mrs. Selwyn, whom he had not seen before, and, after some greeting, said :

"I ventured to ask that you would be present, madam, while I read this extraordinary statement, because Miss Berkley is your ward, and also because if you should detect any errors or falsehoods in it we can have them corrected while those ladies are still here. They propose to leave immediately, and this affair had better be settled at once. We should never, I am convinced, have got so full a confession if Mrs.—Maxwell was not so bewildered by Herr Müller's confusing style of talk, as to suppose that we knew far more than we really did. But under this impression we have obtained it."

"And I must say," broke in Mr. Vincent, "that if ever I have anything to hide, may God preserve me from Brown! I suppose it is being a lawyer and a coroner combined, but a lemon has more chance in a squeezer than that poor woman had with him. He got the story from her drop by drop, till I could see her shrivel." It was impossible not to laugh, but Mr. Brown, declaring that he considered it a compliment to his professional abilities, began, looking at Mrs. Selwyn :

"We must go back, madam, to the time at which your nephew married Miss Agnes Peacroft. At that time this lady, then Miss Penelope Peacroft, having had some quarrel with her father, had left home, and was keeping a little school in a small village in New Hampshire. There she met Mr. Maxwell, then bearing the name of Alford. He was a youth at college, and had come there to read during the summer vacation. They fell in love and were married. He insisted that the marriage should be kept secret, because he

was entirely dependent upon his mother, who would, he told her, be very angry and stop the supplies. She, therefore, did not mention it to her family. In the meantime she heard from her mother of Mrs. Berkley's return and death, and that the infant had been left with her."

"After a time Mrs. Alford's own child was born, and then came the desertion of which Herr Müller has already told you. All of it is written here," looking at his paper.

"She then wrote to her mother for help; but the old woman at first refused to give any assistance, or to believe in the legality of her marriage; but at last she received a letter saying that Mrs. Berkley's child, always a puny infant, was evidently dying, and that with its life the very handsome income paid by Mr. Berkley for its support would also cease. The grandmother, under these circumstances, proposed that they should meet at a certain village, which she named, and await there the death of the elder child, and after some time return home together, substituting the living Alford for the dead Berkley baby. This plan was successfully carried out. Both children had had the dark eyes of their mothers, there was no great difference of age, and the change was unsuspected. This went on until the death of the old woman, and then came, as you know, Mr. Berkley's third marriage. Mrs. Maxwell protests, however, that at that time she firmly believed her first husband to be dead, she having from time to time made such inquiries concerning him as, without exciting suspicion, she could do, and never hearing of his existence. His resuming his own name of Maxwell accounts for this. She had been married for some time, in fact it was not until some eight or ten months before Mr. Berkley's death that she met him in D—, under the name of Maxwell. She knew him, she says, instantly, and almost died of fright. He knew her too, and sought an interview, evidently ruling her entirely. She bought his silence by promising to give him all the money that she could possibly obtain, and it is curious to hear her even now complain of the shifts and contrivances to which he thus forced her."

"Then came Mr. Berkley's death, and now the plot thickens. She says," (reading from the paper,) "that Mr. Berkley desired her to send for Mr. Crofts to make his will, and fearing that he might lose his powers dictated to her a memorandum, the provisions of which were: That the fortune of his second wife should be given to her daughter; that his own property should be divided into three equal portions between the two young ladies and herself; that she should have the guardianship of Miss Agnes, and Mr. Selwyn that of Miss Janet. She had just finished writing these directions, when the messenger sent for Mr. Crofts returned with Mr. Maxwell. Maxwell took the paper, and said: 'This will never do—you shall have all, and I will marry you myself.' She was frightened, but he insisted, and soon returned with two

wills, the one drawn up according to the instructions, the other the one which you have seen. He desired her to read the first to the dying man, and then substituting the second, which exactly resembled it in appearance, to make him sign that, he himself undertaking to engage Mr. George Berkley and the doctors in conversation while the change was being made, to divert their attention."

Here Mr. Brown paused, and looked at George Berkley, who, turning very red, acknowledged, "It is all true. I see it now. I was a fool."

Mr. Brown resumed: "The fraudulent will being thus signed, all seemed safe, and she fully expected that at the end of her year of mourning Mr. Maxwell would present himself as her suitor and marry her, when he suddenly informed her that he had changed his mind.

"I must ask your pardon, madam, for introducing your granddaughter's name in such a connection, but the fact is that he had seen Miss Janet Berkley, and had fallen desperately in love with her."

"The scoundrel!" cried George Berkley, jumping up. "Do you mean to say that he meant to ruin James Berkley's daughter too?"

"Softly, softly, my dear sir. No, he meant to keep Mrs. Berkley's mouth shut, by leaving her all Mr. Berkley's fortune, and to secure in Mr. Selwyn's heiress a lovely and wealthy bride for himself. He was, she says, infatuated, foolishly enamoured—these are her expressions, I beg you to observe. I fancy that the weak joint in his armor, (for he must have been a very clever man,) was that he did love, after the fashion of such men, women. Mrs. Maxwell says that she has had intimations of several such affairs in his life," (Hugh's fingers gripped the arms of his chair,) "although he never committed himself to her."

"She did not give in to this easily. Perhaps the most horrible part of her whole conduct is, that there is not the slightest symptom of any concern or contrition as regards Miss Berkley. Her sole desire was to keep him for herself, for up to that time she seemed to have had some sort of love for him, but she was entirely under hack, and although this desertion made her hate him, she had to consent, and to pay the heavy blackmail all the time; a tax which he promised should cease when, through her help, he had secured Miss Berkley. This they seem to have been sure that he would do, until a new actor appeared on the scene. And here, Mr. Carlton, you come in."

All eyes turned on Hugh, who, crimson to the roots of his hair, was glad to be able to answer: "I have already told my part of the story to Mrs. Ralph Selwyn."

"And he has my warmest sympathy," cried that lady.

Old Mrs. Selwyn looked amazed, and Mr. Selwyn cried:

"Well, go on, for I don't comprehend at all."

"Mr. Carlton, if you fear an apoplexy, you had better go into the open air," said Mr. Brown. "Your modesty will be sorely tried, for the fact is, ladies and gentlemen, that Miss Agnes Berkley, as she has hitherto been called, fell so much in love with Mr. Carlton that she, who had hitherto opposed this scheme, and wished for the marriage of her unacknowledged parents, threw herself heartily into it, in order to get Miss Janet, whom she perceived he preferred, out of her way; and Mr. Maxwell, on his part, fearing so young and dangerous a rival," (with a provoking little bow to Hugh) "also urged Mrs. Berkley to effect a marriage between Mr. Carlton and Miss Agnes, in order to get him out of his way. You perceive the double plot? By a skilful series of inventions Mrs. Berkley succeeded in this last, and, the coast thus left clear, Mr. Maxwell came here fully expecting to be accepted by Miss Janet, but I am informed that she had expressed a decided aversion to him, before his career was so unexpectedly cut short."

"It is true," said Mrs. Ralph Selwyn, "she told me herself of it."

"It is now evident," continued Mr. Brown, that the *Deus ex machina*, or rather, if I may say so, the *Dü*, have been that negro lad, who was probably avenging some base act, and your old German doctor. Of all the oddities in this world he is surely the oddest. He has not even now the least idea of the real state of the case, and tries to console Mrs. Maxwell for the husband whom she hated, and Miss Agnes for the father whom, to speak mildly, she seems to have loathed. Whenever Mrs. Maxwell would hesitate, or try to prevaricate, he would exclaim, 'Ahr yes, thou poor soul, he knoweth all; ease thy poor heart by telling thy woes; thou hast been deceived, thou weak one,' and so on, until she was fairly bewildered."

"I am almost as much bewildered," said Mr. Selwyn. "Unless she cared something for Maxwell, Brown, she would hardly have been so overcome at seeing him dead. I hear her shrieks now."

"Women are queer combinations," said Mr. Brown, with a deprecatory look at the two Mrs. Selwyns. "Not easy to understand any of them, and such a specimen as this, fortunately, seldom comes in one's way. But you must remember, Mr. Selwyn, that she had also to shriek at being found out. Also there was the money for which she certainly does care. Herr Müller has no notion that her present distress is caused by so base a consideration."

"Well," said Mrs. Selwyn, "as her wicked plots have failed, and she is brought to naught, I am glad that she has some one to be kind to her. I myself could not be; and I do not choose Janet to see her. Tell me, gentlemen, what can we do to save scandal to my poor nephew's name?"

"You will not, of course, wish to perpetuate the fraud by calling these persons by it," said Mr. Brown.

"No, no," said George Berkley, "I claim to have a voice there. Cousin Anna, let me suggest that you allow these women a certain pension, on condition that they go away—out of this country, and resume, or rather assume, their proper name, which I suppose is Maxwell. And let the pension depend on their keeping all this story quiet, and making no attempt to call themselves Berkley."

"I advise you so also," added Mr. Ralph Selwyn.

"People will talk, of course," continued Mr. Berkley, "but that can't be helped; this is the best we can do. We were all fools and blind, I think, not to suspect something of this kind before, except my wife, who is certainly the cleverest woman in the world! She told me the day of James' funeral that they were accomplices."

"You told me so at the time," observed Mr. Selwyn, "but I own that I thought it nonsense. George's plan is a good one; Brown, do you not think so?"

"The best possible," answered the lawyer, "although I must observe that legally these ladies are not entitled to the sixpence."

"We cannot think of that," said Mrs. Selwyn; "we must buy silence, and indeed I could not feel morally justified in turning them upon the world penniless. If Agnes had only not joined in the conspiracy against my child—"

"Mrs. Selwyn," broke in the lawyer, "for Heaven's sake waste no compassion on that young lady. She has no vestige of conscience or compunction—is, I should say, a far more dangerous character than her mother, for even in the few words that she lets fall I can see her father's force of character and strength of will. With her great beauty she will do a great deal of harm to men yet."

"Then, Mr. Brown, as unhappily I cannot consult my husband, I must beg you to act by my authority. In another year Janet will be of age, and will be ready to confirm it. As you have been so good already I hope that you will do us the favor to manage the rest of this business."

Mr. Brown declared his willingness, and sought another interview with the ladies. The *ci-devant* Mrs. Berkley would have made some resistance, but Agnes comprehending instantly how useless objection was, and seeing the advantages of the plan proposed, overruled her.

"We will go away," she said to Mr. Brown, "and trouble them no more. Send the money to Paris under the address, 'Mrs. Alford.' I don't want any connection known with *him*. In Paris I shall find a career."

"Very probably," replied the lawyer, coolly.

"And tell Hugh Carlton," she continued, with a slight tremor in her voice, that I wish him joy of that pale doll—my sister! He little knows what *I* would have been to him."

"Have you no word of penitence?" said Mr. Brown sternly, "no prayer for pardon to address to the young lady whose life you

tried to ruin, and on whose bounty you will now live?"

"Prayer—pardon—penitence!" she cried with a horrid laugh. "I was born without them; *he* took the power of them from me with my birth. But I forgive *her* the theft of my lover. Let us go, Mr. Brown, we have no place here."

So they went, and the inmates of Ashurst saw them no more.

Mrs. Ralph Selwyn in the meanwhile had a private interview with her sister-in-law, the result of which was, that soon after Agnes and her mother had departed, Janet was told to put on a warm shawl and go out into the shrubbery where it was sheltered, and take a good walk in the twilight for exercise.

Whom she met in the shrubbery or how long she walked there needs not to be told. Much there was to be said on both sides. Much of the awful fears which had for many hours possessed each for the other, and Janet confessed her falsehood with blushes and hot tears, which Hugh dried as best he might. Hugh spoke with wonder and gratitude of the fidelity of poor Cyrus, who even in dying had faithfully guarded his young mistress' secret, and Janet told how he had even avoided mentioning that it was with Hugh's whip that he had done the deed. Hugh started with surprise.

"I had forgotten the whip entirely," he said. "I remember now throwing it from me in my rage as we talked in the road, that I might not be tempted to strike him with it. Cyrus must have found it on the ground. And

you did this for me, my darling? You with your little pure hands hid the instrument of death!" And he kissed the little hands again and again.

"You do not know," he began, "how horrible that conversation was—the unblushing villany, fearing nothing but detection, and the fierce determination, at all costs and by any means, to have you. He even dared to say—"

But Janet put her fingers on his lips.

"Why should you repeat it?" she said. "He is dead; let his sins and his threats die with him. There is nothing to part us now, Hugh, and it is easy to forgive and forget."

"You must teach me to do it, my love," he answered; "teach me, by forgetting all this pain yourself, so that no grudge shall remain."

It was growing late and cold, and a servant came to call them in. The moon was shining clear above the oaks as they returned to the house, and Hugh, holding back his fair companion, said, fondly:

"Now Janet, say what I begged you to say two years ago, looking at another moon like this. Say this is a happy day."

"This is a happy day," she repeated, looking up at him as he passed his arm around her. "So happy, and after so much suffering! Oh, Hugh! let us pray that He will teach us so to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." And Hugh clasped his hands over hers, and followed solemnly the softly murmured words.

THE END.

ASHURST;

OR

“The Days That Are Not.”

THE PRIZE STORY

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